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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

The Implementation of Mandated Curriculum Based Testing in England and Wales Voices from the Classroom

by

©

Rita Egan

A thesis

submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

Edmonton, Alberta

Spring, 1994

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FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled "The Implementation of Mandated Curriculum Based Testing in England and Wales. Voices from the Classroom" submitted by Rita Egan in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

One of the new policies included in the British Government's 1988 Education Reform Act was the introduction of mandatory testing and assessment of seven year olds against a newly mandated National Curriculum. The results of these tests were published in the form of local authority "league tables". This study examines the effects of this testing policy on teachers' working lives during 1991.

The philosophical focus of this study was drawn from the work of critical theorists such as Paolo Freire, Henry Giroux and Michael Apple. The methodology was based on emancipatory research models. Particular reference was made to the work of Patti Lather and Brian Fay. Emphasis was placed on the critical process of reflection, discussion and action. Thirteen teachers implementing the testing policy in 1991 participated in this research.

Issues that arose in the study include the effect of mandated curriculum, assessment and testing on teaching and learning; how teachers view their professional status; the deskilling and proletarianization of the teacher work force; the tensions between policy formulators and policy implementors; how teachers mediate between a variety of obligations and how dilemmas within the framework of teaching are identified and resolved.

This study found that in 1991 teachers tended to spend more time testing than teaching. There was a significant shift towards teaching according to prescribed curriculum goals. There was a positive attitude towards the National Curriculum but there was considerable hostility towards the testing and assessment policy and towards the bureaucracy charged with overseeing its implementation. Teachers did not believe that learning would improve because of testing. Some, however, believed that teaching would improve because of the National Curriculum. Teachers felt that they were less professional because of the Government's testing policies and their work was more controlled.

Although teachers disagreed with many aspects of this testing policy they did not refuse to implement it. However, three teachers said they wanted to retire because of the Government's new policies. One voluntarily left the profession at the end of 1991.

Acknowledgments

I am completing this thesis a few months before my 50th birthday. It has been something of an achievement. I embarked on this venture back in 1987 when I commenced an M.A. in Education with the Open University in Britain. I worked full-time as a teacher during the three years it took me to complete this degree. It was a lonely task, as the Open University teaches its courses through distance education. It was also the first time the Open University had offered a Masters degree in Education, and to that extent I was a guinea pig. However, there were a number of people who helped me survive the course. Anne Wickham was my first year tutor. She was a wonderful role model. The mother of three children, she worked full-time at Dublin City University and part-time as an Open University tutor. We studied gender and education together. We continued to meet long after the course was over. Thanks Anne. The Open University holds summer schools. This was where I met Chloe West. We took the same courses and graduated at the same time. She has been a constant friend, full of enthusiasm and advice. She always believed in what I was trying to do. Thanks Chloe. I would like to thank the friends I taught with in Northern Ireland, Leicester and Haringey in London. They gave me a great deal or encouragement during some very difficult times. None of these jobs were easy and I often felt discouraged. They were always there to give me support when I needed it.

One of the benefits of taking a degree from the Open University is that you can move around from place to place and still continue with your studies. I lived in a number of locations during the three years of my program. During that time I commuted between my work in Britain and Dublin where I maintained a home. I took my final examinations in Edmonton, Alberta after I had commenced by Ph.D. program. I would like to thank all of those people in the Open University who kept track of me and expedited my numerous

requests for change of tutors, study and examination centers. They were always accommodating and flexible.

Since coming to Edmonton, life has not always been easy. In the first year of my program I had to undergo a back operation which left me incapacitated for some time. I was often lonely and discouraged. There were a number of people who helped me move beyond the immediate difficulties of my personal life so that I could start to benefit from what the university had to offer. I need to thank Shreeram who sent me off to study with Carlos Torres; Berhane who talked for hours with me about international affairs with a wisdom and understanding that few can match; Tony Fisher who showed me that the University could accommodate another way of learning and Chris Prokop for being such a good listener.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Recent criticism of standardized testing in the United States has tended to focus on the nature of tests rather than testing itself. (Berlak, 1985; Cornett, 1982; Haney, 1985; McCurdy & Speich, 1991; NFIE, 1990; Nickerson, 1989; Stiggins, 1985; Quellmalz, 1985; Wiggins, 1989a, 1989b). Berlak (1985) asked, for instance, whether resources expended on externally mandated tests could be better spent on forms of evaluation that "encourage close collaboration between teachers and students and lead more directly to improvement in student motivation and learning" (p. 17). Quellmalz (1985) in discussing a framework for assessing *higher-order learning* proposed that

> students engage in purposeful, extended lines of thought in which they identify and analyze a problem, identify and relate information necessary to address the task, and evaluate the adequacy of conclusions or solutions. . . . The cognitive processes of analysis, comparison, inference, and evaluation seem to be involved in various combinations in reasoning tasks. (p. 31)

McCurdy and Speich (1991) in affirming this view commented, "A growing number of state and federal education leaders, school groups, testing experts and other critics have mounted an effort to change the character and content of tests employed for accountability purposes" (p. 121).

Madaus (in Brandt, 1989) criticized what he called high stakes testing. However, he was not opposed to testing for accountability purposes.

> We shouldn't oppose testing for accountability, but we should lobby for new ways to accomplish public accountability without large-scale multiple-choice testing of all students at a given grade. We should argue for testing samples of students, for using multiple indicators of student progress, and for including teacher discernment and judgement in the process. (p. 29)

Some authors have made a more radical leap and commented on the power of testing to control curriculum regardless of the nature of tests. McCurdy and Speich (1991) pointed out that "the movement to replace standardized, multiple choice tests with new kinds of assessment could not only revolutionize testing but may act as a major force in curriculum reform" (p.123). The same authors believed that performance-based tests, or authentic tests as they are sometimes called (Brandt, 1989), were being viewed as "powerful levers of change" because they had the potential to influence educators' behavior (p.123).

One issue that has had little exposure in this public debate over testing is how teachers feel about having their behavior altered by mandated testing, authentic or otherwise. Apple (1989) in discussing the effect of state mandated testing on women teachers' working lives noted that educational policy in the United States was related to the distribution and production of economic, political and cultural power. Teachers' work was being restructured so that it was more directly linked to specific outcomes. There was a move towards corporate style management. There was also closer monitoring of curricular goals and materials more closely related to industrial, military and ideological needs of a relatively small but powerful segment of American society.

> When coupled with the conservative restoration, and the continuing financial crisis in education, both of these tendencies are having a profound impact at the level of how teachers have done and are now doing their jobs, on what kinds of knowledge are considered the most important for students to learn, and, finally, on who should make decisions concerning these issues. Like the larger crisis, all of this, of course, is not only happening in the United States. (p. 8-9)

Although he was chiefly interested in the use of standardized tests in the United States, Apple commented that these developments were also taking place in Britain and Australia.

Authentic testing may seem to be a progressive strategy, but it may also be a more covert form of control. The control of teachers is more subtle when standardized testing is replaced by multiple faceted assessment linked to curriculum. What is interesting from the point of view of this study is that the kind of testing introduced in Britain is of the authentic type being promoted in the United States and elsewhere. In 1991, for example, Alberta Education examined the British testing formula with a view to introducing some aspects of it themselves.

The tests introduced in 1991 involved teachers to a high degree and also asked them to exercise considerable professional judgement; they were assessing children at different and "higher" levels of cognition; the attainment targets covered a wide and varied range of topics.

However, there is little evidence to show that authentic testing is less restrictive on teachers' working lives than standardized testing. Indeed, as McCurdy and Speich (1991) have pointed out, one of the reasons given in the United States for introducing *authentic* testing was not that it was better for teachers and children, but that it was a more powerful tool with which to control curriculum. The question of standardized test validity as compared with teacher devised testing is an important one in the context of this ideological argument. There is evidence to suggest that teachers' assessment of pupils' progress when measured against externally constructed test results are remarkably accurate (Coladarci, 1986; Hoge and Butcher, 1984; Egan & Archer, 1985). Hoge & Coladarci (1989), reviewing 16 studies on the accuracy of teacher testing versus external testing, commented:

> Our conclusions that the performance judgments (of teachers) are, by and large, valid also has important implications for the practical use of teacher-based assessments. In particular, it speaks to members of the public and to

> educational professionals (e.g. university-based researchers, school psychologists) who express doubts regarding the quality of teacher-based assessments of students. (p. 309)

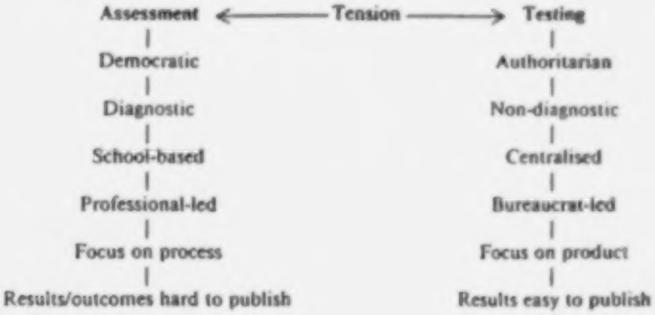
There are also important implications for determining the purpose of centrally mandated educational testing. Even when Hoge & Coladarci's conclusions are weighed against research findings supporting expectancy theory (Rist, 1970; Rosenthal, 1973; Brophy and Good, 1986), there is little evidence to suggest that students with a low self-image will do any better on standardized tests than on tests devised by teachers. The relationship between low expectancy and low achievement is a different issue even though it is sometimes cited as a reason for using externally applied standardized testing. That teachers cannot be trusted to assess children accurately is an opinion more wide-spread than is sometimes imagined. Even the Guardian, normally a bastion of the "left" in Britain commented in 1988 that "Mrs.Thatcher is right to imply that the tests should be carried out by external authorities rather than internally within the school. This will ensure that they are independent, objective and capable of comparison" (March 11, 1988).

The validity of standardized tests compared with teacher assessment and the effect of teacher expectation on performance have long been contested issues. This begs the question as to why centralized testing of the sort introduced into England and Wales, and which is being promoted in the United States, was deemed valid at all, let alone necessary. The answer lies, as Madaus (1989) pointed out, with the move towards public accountability. The fact that standardized testing has been shown to be neither useful, valid nor reliable is beside the point. Cost-benefit measures were deemed necessary to justify enormous public expenditure on education and to control the use to which that money was put.

A number of writers in Britain have commented on the shift in education policy toward market accountability. Hargreaves (1986) believed that the oil crisis of 1973 marked the critical turning point in government strategy. By 1976, the Labour government was forced to borrow 4 million pounds from the International Monetary Fund. A condition of the loan was a restriction on public expenditure including education.

> Schools, like all other public-sector institutions, would have to demonstrate that they were 'cost effective' for, by linking the progress of the economy with the process of education, it was argued that if the economy was in decline educational standards had demonstrably not come up with the "goods". (Troman, 1989, p. 280)

Troman (1989) has argued that the type of testing introduced in Britain as a result of the Reform Act was bound to cause friction in schools because of its dual purpose. On the one hand, the tests were designed to measure outcomes, on the other, they were supposed to be measuring process. Troman (1989) felt that the Conservative government was headed towards " The neat, quick, cheap and quantifiable and away from the complex, slow, expensive and qualitative" (p.289). But in whatever direction they were headed the tension existed between the two models identified by Troman (1989) below.



Assessment ← Tension →	Testing
Democratic	Authoritarian
Diagnostic	Non-diagnostic
School-based	Centralised
Professional-led	Bureaucrat-led
Focus on process	Focus on product
Results/outcomes hard to publish	Results easy to publish

FIG. 1. Schematic representation of educational assessment and testing models.

p. 289

The shift to "authentic" tests, therefore, was not so much a shift as a rather cleverly contrived hostile take-over of an expensive but more democratic form of assessment. It is a moot point as to whether the two models offered by Troman (1989) are mutually exclusive or in some way reconcilable. What the British government did was to give the authoritarian nature of its testing program an assessment gloss; however, the contradictory philosophies seemed headed for a collision course in 1991. Were the working lives of teachers administering the program headed for the casualty room? Where authentic tests have appeared in the United States, problems have already emerged. (Popkewitz & Lind, 1989; Freedman, Jackson & Boles, 1983).

Were there lessons to be learned from the North American experience? Was the shift to "authentic" tests in Britain and the United States a smoke screen for a political agenda as Apple has claimed? Is the real intention of centrally imposed testing, whatever form it takes, a strategy aimed at controlling education for political and economic purposes? Do democratically elected governments have a responsibility to control education and schooling? Is the transformation of the nature of testing sufficient to transform teachers' thinking and behavior? Are there other factors that must be taken into account such as the structure of schooling; the power within organizations; the feminization of teachers in the lower age cohorts in schools; the resistance of teachers and teacher unions to legislated educational change; the historical autonomy of teachers in the classrooms; the factors that aid or impede policy implementation; the fact that policy is dependent on the will of people in order for it to succeed? These questions regarding the nature of teachers' work and the impact of power and policy on their teaching lives form the basis of this study.

Professionals in Bureaucracies

One way in which we can come to understand the nature of teachers' work is through teachers' understandings of what it means to be a professional.

> A profession is a work group that has acquired a legal monopoly over expertise associated with an abstract body of knowledge. It can police members and control licensing standards. And it endorses independent occupational norms that may be in conflict with certain policies and practices of the work organizations that employ members of the profession. (Corwin and Borman, 1988, p. 221).

This definition of professionalism demonstrates the contradictory role of teachers in schools. As Seeley and Schwartz (1981) have pointed out teachers usually form the base level of a bureaucratic organizational model even though the process of teaching is the heart of the organizational activity.

Questions of control and constraint arise when teachers as professionals work in a bureaucratic organization. The demands of teachers as professionals to control their work must be mediated against the demands of administrators to constrain it. Corwin and Borman (1988) have identified six structural incompatibilities within educational organizations that constrain and control the administrative process. They describe these constraints and controls as dilemmas because of their apparent irreconcilability.

The dilemma of control addresses the problem of decentralized policy implementation. Bureaucratic protocol protects control, but can impede progress in implementation. Too little control can cause slippage. The dilemma of autonomy deals with the, generally, subordinate status of teachers administratively which must be matched against their often powerful collective status within teachers' organizations. The dilemma of occupational status is concerned with the fact that teachers are legally obliged to comply with policies and directives often at the expense of their own professional judgement. The dilemma of career structure deals with the bottom heavy structure of the teaching profession, the limited opportunities for advancement, and the problem of motivating career teachers in mid-life. The dilemma of order focusses on the fact that arrangements to maintain order can subvert the goals of instruction. Finally, the dilemma of equity highlights the virtually impossible task of treating all children fairly according to their needs within the constraints of a bureaucratic organization.

The contradictory life of a professional teacher must involve mediation between multiple demands. One of the purposes of this study is to try and understand this process of mediation during a time of radical policy implementation. How do teachers mediate between their role as professionals and their role as subordinate members of a large educational bureaucracy? How do teachers mediate between the needs of children and the demands of policy directives? How do teachers mediate between the personal control they have over their private lives and the lack of control they have over their public lives as servants of the state? Answers to these questions can best be determined through dialogue with teachers involved in the implementation of a policy on assessment about their working lives.

Questions that Guided the Study

This study sought to explore the impact of Key Stage 1 Assessment and Testing on teachers' working lives and their understanding of what these political changes meant for them as teachers. The major questions which guided the study were:

1. How did mandated curriculum based testing and assessment affect teachers' working lives?
2. Was there any evidence that teaching and learning improved because of

mandated testing and assessment?

3. How did teachers understand the nature of professionalism?
4. What was the relationship between teachers and the bureaucracies overseeing the implementation of the Education Reform Act?
5. What can we learn from this study about successful policy implementation?

Background to the Questions

The 1988 Education Reform Act was the most radical piece of educational legislation in Britain since 1944. Apart from the 11+ examination which determined selective entry into secondary schools through standardized assessment, British teachers have never been required to administer centrally prescribed tests, nor teach to a nationally prescribed curriculum. The 1988 Act legislated both.

The Education Act referred to in this document was passed by the British Parliament in July, 1988. It was preceded by another important piece of legislation the Education (No. 2) Act, 1986. The 1986 Education (No. 2) Act's chief feature was to make provision for reform of the "composition of school governing authorities (LEA's - locally elected authorities providing and administering publicly financed education in schools and colleges in their areas) . . . appraisal of the performance of teachers and more effective in-service training of teachers" (COI ref. paper No 301/89, p.2). The Education Reform Act provided for the establishment of a National Curriculum for children aged 5 - 16 in all state schools and for regular assessment of student performance. The National Curriculum and Assessment would be organized around 10 years of formal schooling and four Key Stages culminating in national testing at ages 7, 11, 14 and 16. The 1988 Act also introduced a mechanism whereby schools would eventually manage their own budgets through an LEA agreed formula, or opt out completely from Local Authority control. Whilst these latter aspects of the 1988 Act seem unrelated to the National Curriculum and Assessment it will become apparent later in this document that there were important ramifications concerning the implementation of the Act in schools.

The essential features of the Reform Act were summarized and distributed by The Department of Education and Science (DES) to Local Education Authorities (LEA's), Chief Education Officers, Heads and Governing Bodies of Maintained Schools, Teacher Training Institutes and other interested bodies on February 22, 1989 via DES Circular No 5/89. The DES also widely distributed another less detailed document *National Curriculum. From Policy to Practice*. For the sake of clarity, when these documents are referred to they are abbreviated as DESC 5/89 and NCPP/89.

The National Curriculum

According to Section 1(2) of the 1988 Act the purpose of the National Curriculum was to put in place a "balanced and broadly based" curriculum that promoted the "spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society" and to prepare pupils for "opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life" (DESC 5/89, p.7). To this end Section 3 of the Act specified both a core curriculum consisting of mathematics, English and science and the other obligatory foundation subjects which consisted of history, geography, technology, music, art, physical education and a modern language (DESC 5/89, p.7). Religious education in sections 6-13 of the Act was made compulsory as was a daily collective worship of "wholly or mainly . . . Christian character" [Section 7(1)].

The Act did not specify how much of the school day should be devoted to the ten compulsory subjects. During the consultative stage of the Bill the Department of Education and Science (DES) specified in some detail the time allocation for each subject. The estimated amount of time allocated to the ten core and foundation subjects was between 75% and 85%. However, there was considerable resistance to the time allocation being prescribed by legislation and the first draft of the Bill was amended. The then Secretary of State for Education, Kenneth Baker, noted during the second reading of the Bill, that it was unlikely any school could complete the requirements of the National Curriculum in less than 70% of allocated time. The remaining 30% would be all that remained for religious education and worship, extra mathematics and science, and all the other subjects taught in schools. (Maclure, 1988; Leonard, 1988). Section 4(3) of the Act was unusual in that it specifically prohibited the Secretary of State from making an Order that specified the amount of time allocated to core and foundation subjects (DESC 5/89, p.10).

In order to administer the new National Curriculum, the government established on August 15th, 1988, a National Curriculum Council (NCC) [Section 14(1)(a)] and a School Examinations and Assessments Council (SEAC) [Section 14(1)(c)] (DESC/89, p.4). Each council consisted of 15 members appointed by the Secretary of State for Education and their functions as described in Section 14 of the Education Act were broadly similar. Both were to monitor development in schools; advise the Secretary of State; publish and disseminate information and carry out research and development work. The detailed functions of the Councils were set out in DESC/89, p.Annex F(1) and Annex F(2).

National Curriculum Council

The National Curriculum Council worked closely together with the School

Examinations and Assessment Council (SEAC). The Council's permanent committee structure was approved in September, 1989. It consisted of 6 committees, an executive committee and five committees which reported directly to the Council. The National Curriculum Council was given extensive consultative powers in the Act. No order could be placed before parliament in relation to curriculum without the Curriculum Council consulting LEA's, teacher unions and representatives of governing bodies. This resulted in a vast dissemination of literature throughout the Education system as every school and authority was entitled to view and comment upon proposed curriculum content.

The National Curriculum Council was obliged to report the results of its consultative process to the Secretary of State but the government was not obliged to accept the Council's recommendations. There have been a number of controversial disputes since the Council's work began. Notable amongst these have been the disagreements over the content of the history curriculum and the nature of the Key Stages 3 and 4 - 14-16 year olds - curriculum. In fact, it was disagreement over the English curriculum and tests which ultimately led to the 1993 boycotting of all government testing.

At the commencement of this study the Secretary of State for Education was Kenneth Clarke. In a speech to the North of England conference on the 4th January 1991 (released by the Department of Education and Science on the 2nd February), he took issue with the recommendation of the National Curriculum Council that all students should study the ten foundation subjects until age 16 thereby sacrificing depth for breadth. He announced that henceforth a number of subjects including history, geography, art and music would be optional subjects at Key Stage 4. This announcement elicited a vitriolic response in the Times Educational Supplement from almost every sector of the secondary schools system chiefly because at least two years of intensive planning by curriculum, subject and school development committees was rendered redundant by the stroke of a Minister's pen.

The School Examinations and Assessment Council

The assessment of the National Curriculum was the responsibility of the School Examinations and Assessment Council (SEAC). SEAC also had a committee structure divided into subject committees, policy committees and the Council itself. The mechanism for specifying the more detailed work of the Council was the statutory Order in Council. The most important Order for the purposes of this study was the Education Order 1990 passed on 23rd July, 1990 to come into effect August 1, 1990 (DES Circular No 9/90). This Order which dealt with the National Curriculum and assessment arrangements for English, Mathematics and Science, established the procedures for the Key Stage 1 testing which took place in 1991 and formed part of the package of materials distributed to schools by SEAC in September of 1990.

Background to Assessment Procedures

Prior to the passing of the Act the Government set up a Task Group on Assessment and Testing (TGAT) chaired by Professor Paul Black, Head of the Centre for Educational Studies at King's College, London. Their report of Christmas 1987, produced in less than 5 months, formed the basis of DES policy and the guide for the National Curriculum subject working groups which were to consider attainment targets, programmes of study and assessment arrangements. Nevertheless, there were significant philosophical differences between the assessment procedures as conceived by TGAT and those that were finally ordered by the Government.

The chief features of the TGAT report were:

- Close interdependence between curriculum, teaching and assessment
- Full involvement of teachers
- Varied forms of assessment, including assessment via tasks which form a normal part of classroom activity
- Time for the development of assessment measures and for the training of teachers in their use
- Assessment at the primary level which was compatible with good primary practice
- Sensible ground rules for reporting results
- Realistic timetable for the introduction of the scheme.

The DES also circulated a summary to schools later in the year in the form of a booklet: *National Curriculum. Task Group on Assessment and Testing Report: A digest for schools.* Three supplementary reports were submitted by the TGAT on March 25th, 1988 outlining in more detail some of the concerns raised in the original reports. One such concern was the training requirements needed to deliver the National Curriculum and Assessment. This had become a particularly thorny issue with the teacher unions because of its implications for their members. On June 7th the government responded to these reports in the form of a Parliamentary Answer from the Secretary of State for Education and Science (who at that time was John MacGregor) (DES Circular 5/89). There were three major points of disagreement between the Government and the TGAT: formative versus summative assessment; publication of results and the lead-in time for the introduction of testing.

TGAT stressed that assessment until the age of 16 should be essentially formative. "We judge therefore that an assessment system designed for formative purposes can meet all the needs of national assessment at ages before 16. At age 16 the focus shifts from formative to summative" (TGAT Report, 1988. para. 26). They recommended, therefore that "the basis of the national assessment system be essentially formative, but designed to indicate where there was need for more detailed diagnostic assessment. At age 16, however, it should incorporate assessment with summative functions" (TGAT Report, 1988, para. 27). TGAT wanted results to be published only in the context of a report of the school as a whole and they were opposed to publication of test results of 7 year olds. (TGAT report, 1988, para. 132-137)

> Results for schools should be published in the context of a report about the work of the school as a whole. They should not be adjusted for *socio-economic* factors, but each school's report should include a description of its circumstances and catchment area, and a general statement of the broad effect of socio-economic factors on performance. Schools with age 7 pupils should not be required to publish the distribution of results for that age group, because assessed performance in the early primary stage is influenced by many factors and is not a good guide to a school's effectiveness. (DES Press Release, 12.1.88, para. 11)

TGAT did not envisage full reporting of results for five years from the passage of the Act (TGAT Report, para. 195-199) and suggested that "implementation should not begin until a sufficient range of subject attainment targets is in place to enable cross-subject profile components to be compiled from the outset" (DES Press Release, 12.1.88).

In John MacGregor's statement of June 7, 1988 the government made clear its intention to emphasize summative assessment. "The results of tests and other assessments should be used both *formatively* to help better teaching and to inform decisions about next steps for a pupil, and *summatively* at ages 7, 11, 14 and 16 to inform parents about the child's progress" [DES Circular 5/89, Annex D,(e)].

The Secretary of State pointed out that there should be no legal requirement for schools to publish the results of the tests of seven year olds but strongly recommended that schools should do so. He made no mention of the suggestion that reporting should take place in the context of socio-economic circumstances. (DES Circular 5/89, Annex D, (f, g))

The Secretary of State also ignored the advice of the TGAT regarding phasing in time. He announced that the first cohort of pupils in primary schools would begin work in Autumn, 1989 on National Curriculum attainment targets for core subjects and that the first trial SATs (Standard Assessment Tasks) would be administered to the Key Stage 1 seven year olds in 1991. The results would be "unreported". That is, schools would not be obliged to report these results to parents until 1992 (DES Circular 5/89, annex D, (g)).

Key Stage 1 (Yr.2) Assessment in Place

The responsibility for drawing up SATs rested with SEAC. To this end in October, 1988 SEAC issued the specification of contracts to develop, trial, pilot and finalize SATs for English, Welsh, mathematics and science at Key Stage 1. The criteria for the development of the SATs were as follows:

a. reliably and validly assesses a number of attainment targets in all profile components expressed in terms of TGAT levels;

b. can be used fairly by the maximum range of pupils, including SEN (Special Educational Needs);

c. can be easily administered and recorded by teachers;

d. can be so administered by teachers as a natural part of their normal (and frequently cross-curricular) mode of teaching;

e. requires only resources that are normally available in a primary school;

f. motivates pupils and engages their interest;

g. yields tangible results including written evidence for consideration in the moderation exercise or otherwise necessary.
(SEAC, 1988, p. 4)

On 16 December, 1988 SEAC awarded contracts worth 6.3 million pounds to three consortia for the development of SATs in the core subjects at the end of Key Stage 1. The resulting SATs were tested in a pilot exercise involving some 2% of seven year olds during the summer of 1990. As a result of these pilots, SEAC issued a detailed *Specification for the Development of SATs at Key Stage 1* and the three consortia who had piloted the original SATs were invited to tender for the contract to deliver SATs for the following two years. The stunning speed at which policy decisions were made was demonstrated by the fact that SEAC's specifications were approved by the Secretaries of State for Education and Science and for Wales on October 18th, and on 24th October the contract was awarded to the National Foundation for Educational Research. This development agency led a consortia of institutions which included Bishop Grosseteste College, Lincoln; the NFER-Nelson Publishing company; and two LEAs, West Sussex and Sheffield. (SEAC, Press Release, 24th October, 1990).

It is worth remembering that although "expert" designed tests (SATs) were being planned to deliver to each Key Stage 1 child in the Summer term of l991 (with pilots in 1990), teachers were also expected to design appropriate in-class exercises (teacher assessment tasks) designed to identify individual student attainment levels for each target of the National Curriculum and to be administered throughout the academic year.

The timetable for the development of SATs and the teacher assessment element that preceded them, the dissemination of information regarding assessment arrangements and the training of advisors and teachers was set out in the SEAC Specification document, 1990 and Annex 11 of the Specification document, 1988. They were summarized in the *Timetable for the Assessment cycle 1990/91* SEAC document and in the *National Curriculum: A Guide for Parents* (National Curriculum Council, 1989). It can be seen from this document that the lead-in time had been minimal for everyone concerned with the delivery of the assessment cycle. Phase 1 was completed by March 31, 1991. This consisted chiefly of training for the administering of SATs and the teacher assessment element of the assessment cycle.

Phase 1 of the Assessment Cycle

The program for National Assessment was organized at three levels. Firstly there were subject levels. In the first year of the program only three core subjects were assessed (except in Wales where Welsh was also included), mathematics, English and science. Each subject was further subdivided into profile components. English, for instance, had three components, speaking and listening, reading and writing, spelling and handwriting. Each component was then divided into attainment targets. For Key Stage 1 these varied in number from 1 in the case of the first profile component in English to 16 in the Science profile component number 2.

Secondly, the assessment was not only arranged around subject areas, profile components and attainment targets, but also included ten levels of proficiency of increasing difficulty for each of these targets. However, at Key Stage 1, children were not be assessed beyond level 3. For example, in Science, the first profile component consisted of just one attainment target defined as "exploration of science". Within this attainment target, however, there were 10 levels of proficiency and 52 different assessments possible over a period of 10 years of schooling. At level 2 which most 7 year olds were expected to attain, a child was asked to identify simple differences such as hot/cold, rough/smooth and interpret findings such as light things float and thin wood bends. At level 5, however, when children would be around 10 years of age, they would be expected to select and use measuring instruments such as thermometers and forcemeters to quantify variables.

The number of teacher assessments which were to administered before March 31st was substantial. If all children were tested at all levels for all attainment targets identified for Key Stage 1 there would be around 250 assessments for each child. In reality, SEAC estimated that 80% of children tested would only reach level 2 at Key Stage 1. Furthermore, teachers were responsible for deciding at what level children should be tested. It was not necessary for teachers to assess at level 1 in English, for instance, if there was evidence that the child had already reached that level in the previous year. Neither was it necessary for children to be assessed at level 3 if the teacher did not think this was a reasonable attainment. Attainment targets were set according to a developmental expectation of performance according to age. The test formulators never anticipated more than 10% of children attaining the highest level of achievement prescribed in any Key Stage. It was anticipated, therefore, that teachers would test only a small number at the highest level of each Key Stage.

Even so, even if level 1 and level 3 were eliminated from the calculations, the number of teacher assessments on each child that would have to have taken place before March 31st, 1991 was still 28 for Maths, 37 for Science and 21 for English. For just level 2 this was a total of 86 assessments. As well as this, some attainment targets in English were weighted and the results had to be resolved through a formula provided in the School Assessment Folder. More emphasis was given on composition than, for example, spelling or handwriting. The level of competency had to be calculated as an average using a weighting system. As teachers in Year 2 have very little release time from teaching most of this kind of work had to done outside teaching time. Furthermore, teachers were still expected to teach the other foundation subjects as well as religious education. Indeed, Year 2 teachers were expected to include technology in the 1992 year and eventually all foundation subjects in the assessment cycle.

Phase 2 of the Assessment Cycle

In 1991 the government's plan was for SATs to be administered during the first half of the summer term (Mid April - end of May). The pilot SATs administered in 1990 indicated that the number of attainment targets that could be formally assessed had to be kept relatively small. To this end teachers were only expected to administer SATs on nine attainment targets seven of which were compulsory and two chosen by the teacher (called "constrained"). (Teachers administering in Welsh only had 8 attainment targets). The SATs were summarized in the School Assessment Folder, Part 3, page 9 - 10. By the time teachers came to administer the SATs they were expected to have completed their teacher assessments. The SATs were to be administered at the level indicated by the teacher assessment. Instructions for completing the results were given in the folder and teachers were supposed to have received training during Phase 1 of the cycle. Although all SATs had to be administered in the first 6 weeks of the summer term, schools were encouraged to administer them during the first three weeks. SEAC estimated that the SATs would take approximately one and a half weeks or 30 hours of teaching time to administer. This did not include the reading element because it was thought this would take much longer to assess. (The reading assessment English AT2 was to be undertaken in conjunction with a reading list provided by SEAC consisting of 52 selected children's books). Even so, it was expected that all teachers would have completed their assessment and recording not later than the end of the first half of the summer term (May 31)(School Assessment Folder, Part 3, p. 12). SAT results were to be "resolved" in June and by July, teachers were to report results to parents. In September there was to be an evaluation of the 1990/91 assessment cycle and by October a determination of the training needs for the next cycle (SEAC, 1990, Timetable for the Assessment Cycle, 1990/91).

Significance of the Study

In the past two decades there has been considerable comment and widespread concern over the effect of testing on teachers and children (Baker and Stikes, 1991; Black, 1992; Broadfoot, 1990; Gipps, 1990; Iven, 1992; Nuttall, 1991; Schagen, 1991; Stake, 1991) However, this concern has not been translated into a substantial body of research. In fact, empirical research on the effects of testing on teaching and learning are rare enough. Kirkland (1971) observed over twenty years ago that although standardized tests were being administered in the hundreds of millions a year and the social consequences of testing were increasingly under scrutiny there was surprisingly little empirical research undertaken on the effects of testing. Kirkland (1971), in his review of research literature on testing could unearth only two relevant longitudinal studies. A recent review of literature on the impact of testing by Calder (1990) indicated that empirical research was still scarce. Furthermore, the research undertaken has almost been almost entirely directed at assessing the effects of standardized tests. This is not surprising because standardized tests have been the most popular kind of tests used in schools.

Brown (1993) studied the reaction of principals and teachers to state mandated testing. He found, for example, that legislators rarely understood the impact or purpose of testing legislation and that local educators placed little trust in decisions mandated by legislators with no expertise in the field of education. Marso and Pigge (1991) asked testing directors, school principals, teacher supervisors and classroom teachers about the purpose of standardized tests. They found that although classroom instructional use was most mentioned, there were different responses between elementary and secondary school teachers and testing directors' ideas varied according to the extent and nature of their training. Shepard and Dougherty (1991) studied the effects of standardized testing on instruction in two school districts. They found evidence of teaching to tests and some manipulation of test results. Soltz (1992) explored whether teachers' attitudes towards standardized tests affected the amount of preparation that went into their administration. He found no relationship between teachers' personal feelings and the way they administered the tests. Similar work has been undertaken by Nolen (1992), Fuchs et al (1991) and Smith, (1991). Hodges (1992) found that teachers' informal assessment of literacy levels were a more valid measure of ability than standardized test scores.

The significance of this study lies in its attempt to examine the effect on teachers' working lives of what on the surface, anyway, appears to be a much improved form of testing. The assessments administered in the U.K. were not standardized tests but curriculum based tests, and there was to be a considerable element of professional judgement required during the assessment process.

There is currently some pressure within the United States and Canada to reform the kinds of tests being administered in schools. One of the questions this research will pose is - to what end? Do the kinds of tests which were administered in Britain make a difference to the way teachers teach and students learn? Are critics justified in claiming that curriculum based assessment and testing is just a more subtle means of controlling teachers? Will teachers find nationalized curriculum assessment an acceptable alternative to standardized testing? Is there any evidence that educational standards will be raised because of nationalized standardized testing and assessment?

The introduction of nationalized testing in Britain through the use of Standardized Attainment Tasks presented a unique opportunity for the researcher to see behind the public face of policy and reveal the private reactions of those charged with its implementation. It may well be that once teachers have been heard we may come to a better understanding of the relationship between testing policy and testing practice. We may also come to understand how different forms of testing affect the nature of teachers' work and how they affect teachers' understandings of what it means to be a professional.

Overview of the study

The following format has been used to display the findings of this study. A description of the philosophical focus of this research is followed by a literature review. Data gathered from conversations with teachers in 1991 is analysed. Finally, a summary and critique of findings will be presented.

Chapter 2

Philosophical Focus of the Study

When the British Government introduced the National Curriculum and the assessment procedures that accompanied it they stated that they were promoting the "spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils and society" and preparing pupils for "opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life" (DESC 5/89,p.7). In making this statement the government was declaring the importance it placed on controlling the functions and content of schools.

The function of education and its relationship to the functions of the State have been contentious issues in sociological theory. In particular, Marxists and neo-Marxists have sought to show how control of education by the state can be an economic, social, political and cultural means of maintaining the privileged position of elite groups in society. Although the State claims to offer equality of opportunity to all groups in society and to promote democratic forms of schooling, in reality there is little evidence that the structure of socio-economic groups in society has changed through education (Anisef, 1985; Carnoy & Levin, 1985; Levin, 1985; Williamson, 1981; Wood, 1984).

One group of educators who have sought to show how education fails to produce a more equitable society are critical theorists. However, critical theorists have not just developed a theory of why schools fail to promote equality, they have also sought to show how schools can change the social order.

This study of the impact of the Education Reform Act on teaching and learning in British schools acknowledges the work of critical theorists. In order to understand how critical analyses of schooling affect the philosophical focus of this study it is necessary to outline the underlying assumptions. In this regard McLaren's (1989) summary of critical theory provides a valuable analytical context.

A Critical Theory of Schooling

McLaren (1989) identified a number of factors as fundamental aspects of critical theory. Schools are first and foremost perceived as being political and cultural enterprises which are neither value neutral nor apolitical. Critical theorists believe schools serve an important economic and political purpose in maintaining and legitimizing the privileged and powerful position of economic elites. Curriculum is considered a powerful tool in the armory of state control. The kinds of knowledge that are given pre-eminence, the nature of thinking and talking that takes place in schools, the kinds of cultural norms that are promoted or denigrated, the types of organizational and power structures that maintain educational systems, all promote a form of social injustice that is both insidious and yet is often misrecognized as being the result of "democratic" education. Critical theorists aim to correct this social injustice through the promotion of emancipatory teaching and learning in schools.

Although McLaren's (1989) summary, and indeed, much of critical theorists' work, is focused on the emancipation of students, the role of the teacher remains paramount in any emancipatory activity in schools. A closer examination of the way critical theorists view teaching and learning will reveal how the teacher in the classroom is in a critical position to bring about change in students' school lives. Giroux (1988), for instance, has shown how teachers can come to reflect on their role in education and bring about a transformation in the learning process. He described this kind of teacher as a "transformative intellectual". The concept was originally developed by the Italian Marxist philosopher, Gramsci, who believed that "organic intellectuals" within the oppressed working class could help to bring about a non-violent hegemonic revolution. Freire (1988) also believed that social change could be wrought in society through a non-violent emancipatory educational process.

> One of the gravest obstacles to the achievement of liberation is that oppressive reality absorbs those within it and thereby acts to submerge men's consciousness. Functionally, oppression is domesticating. To no longer be prey to its force, one must emerge from it and turn upon it. This can be done only by means of the praxis: reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it. (p. 36)

Critical theorists like Freire believed that oppressed people often suffer from false consciousness. They misrecognize the way that their social conditions are constructed and the part they play in the economic and social structures in society. Education plays a crucial role in legitimizing and re-inforcing this misrecognition. Critical theorists have, therefore, developed a theory of schooling which analyses the political, economic, cultural and social functions of education.

The Functions of Schooling

Critical theorists see schools as reflecting two contradictory functions. On the one hand schools act as a sorting mechanism in which select groups are favored on the basis of race, class and gender. On the other hand they see schools as potentially powerful agencies for self and social empowerment. The fact that the former function tends to overpower the latter in some cases almost to the point of obliteration is rarely acknowledged by the State. In fact various agents of the State will dismiss the failure of the schools to promote equality as a consequence of factors outside their control such as local mismanagement, inept teaching, poor parenting, cultural disinterest, the corrupting influence of the media, welfare payments that are a disincentive to work, union militancy and so forth. The State and its agents such as the political party in power, and the permanent secretariat in the civil service, like to give the impression that schools are politically neutral and that equal opportunity to access education is the same thing as equality. We know this is not the case, because the socio-economic structures within society do not change much. The working class, by and large, remain working class and the aristocracy remain aristocratic. Levin's (1985) study on the educationally disadvantaged in the United States, for example, showed that the most successful children in school, and therefore the ones most likely to attend university and get high paying jobs, were the ones whose parents had graduated from high school or college. The children least likely to succeed in school were the ones whose parents lived in poverty.

Critical theorists believe that "schooling always represents an introduction to, preparation for, and legitimation of particular forms of social life" (McLaren, 1989, p. 161). As we have seen, the sorting mechanisms applied by the State through its political agents have as their foundation education policies which promote the concept of equity as being interchangeable with equal opportunity. However, critical theorists challenge this assumption that schools are major sites of social and economic mobility. Schools not only fail to educate all children equally and effectively, they promote cultural norms in schools which are aimed at maintaining social inequity. They do this because of the external political and economic infrastructures within which they operate, and because the State attempts to maintain a firm control on the form and content of knowledge that is passed on in schools.

An important point that critical theorists such as Giroux and Apple make is that educational policy is never innocent of social, economic and institutional contexts. Although State policy makers claim to be promoting politically neutral curricula, they are in fact selecting, decontextualizing and emphasizing those features of the education process that will best promote the preeminent needs of elite groups within the State. As McLaren (1989) put it, "schooling must be analyzed as a cultural and historical process in which select groups are positioned within asymmetrical relations of power on the basis of specific race, class and gender groupings" (p. 162).

Control of Curriculum and Knowledge

One way in which schools fail to promote equity is through the manipulation of the curriculum and through vocational tracking. Critical theorists have begun to examine the ways in which school curricula, promotion of certain types of knowledge, the way knowledge is measured and valued, the way cultural norms are reinforced and the way schooling is controlled are all primarily tied to the demands of the economy and the demands of the State.

Critical theorists are particularly interested in the way curricula are constructed, because the kind of learning that takes place in schools is related to the type of information that is considered important and how it is presented. Giroux has developed a theory of curriculum which emphasizes the social and historical importance of context in curriculum construction. McLaren (1989) described Giroux's *theory of interest* and *theory of experience* as follows:

> By *theory of interest*, Giroux means that curriculum reflects the interests that surround it: the particular visions of past and present that they represent, the social relations they affirm or discard. By *theory of experience*, Giroux means that curriculum is an historically constructed narrative that produces and organizes student experiences in the context of

> social forms, such as language usage, organization of knowledge into high and low status categories, and the affirmation of particular kinds of teaching strategies. (p.165)

Giroux goes on to illuminate the central place of curriculum in the struggle for control of schools. Schools form a battle ground where "different versions of authority, history, the present, and the future struggle to prevail" (McLaren,1989, p. 165).

The promotion of vested interests rarely takes place overtly. Apple (1989) demonstrated the importance of the publishing industry in controlling curriculum selection and the way in which teachers, especially female teachers, tried to resist the imposition of texts and testing. Apple (1989) also talked about the covert agenda of curriculum which has come to be known as the "hidden curriculum". Critical theorists conceptualize the covert features of curriculum as the praxis of power and knowledge. In order to understand the potency of this brew, critical theorists have developed theories of knowledge which are closely related to the way in which knowledge is constructed and how it is discussed.

Knowledge

Knowledge is viewed by critical theorists as historically and socially rooted and interest bound. Critical pedagogues ask how and why knowledge is constructed. How do our every day understandings get produced and lived out? What are the social functions of knowledge?

Following the work of Jurgen Habermas, critical theorists have distinguished between technical knowledge, practical knowledge and emancipatory knowledge (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). Technical knowledge is quantifiable and uses hypothetico - deductive or empirical analytical methods of inquiry. Practical knowledge is generally acquired through describing and analyzing social situations historically or developmentally. Emancipatory knowledge attempts to reconcile the opposition between technical and practical knowledge and aims at "creating the conditions under which irrationality, domination, and oppression can be overcome and transformed through deliberative, collective action. In short, it creates the foundation for social justice, equality, and empowerment" (McLaren, 1989, p. 170). Critical educators argue that the State has a vested interest in promoting practical and technical knowledge. The acquisition of emancipatory knowledge is discouraged because it affords students the opportunity to challenge the causes of inequality in society. One way that governments have done this in the higher education sector is to withdraw funds from universities and university departments such as sociology and political science that have publicly criticized government policy. They do not do this directly but through a system of funding which is controlled by government appointed committees. Such has been the case in Britain.

The University Grants Committee ((UGC) was set up in 1919 to act as a buffer zone between the Department of Education and Science, the Treasury and the universities (Mann, 1979). Since 1964, the DES has taken over responsibility for funding. As Watson (1988) has pointed out the UGC was "perceived with hostility and suspicion as an agency of government playing a very important role in university affairs" (p. 61). The autonomy of universities was continually under fire especially as the UGC had the right to exercise control over student numbers at each university, allocate grants to each university, and even insist on the closure of individual departments if it believed there was unnecessary duplication. (Watson, 1988, p. 66). In 1986 the UGC went further and undertook a review of all university departments in terms of research output. "The research methodology was highly questionable and inapplicable to the social studies/humanities departments" (Watson, 1988, p. 66). The UGC has now been replaced by a University Funding Council which continues to systematically monitor the progress of university departments and rank them on their research output. Whilst this might seem an exercise in efficiency, it also demonstrates the power of the State to control the kinds of knowledge it wishes to promote and fund. As the administrators and practitioners involved in education are trained in universities it is not surprising that governments have an interested in controlling university education.

Critical educators argue that knowledge should be analyzed on the basis of whether it is oppressive and exploitative, and not on the basis of whether it is "true". Texts that distort history through biased selection of material give selectively "true" accounts. Furthermore, knowledge can be decontextualised. Whether this is done covertly or overtly, the effect is often to remove or distort its social, economic, cultural or political significance. Revealing and eliminating the hidden agenda of schools and texts is an important feature of critical educators' work. Another feature of critical educators' work is to reveal the power of language in maintaining control over knowledge. Language controls the way we think and talk and as such is a powerful tool in controlling ideologies and cultures. This kind of power is usually referred to by critical theorists as the power of *discourse*.

Discourse

This is an important concept in critical theory because it is related to the way in which dominant groups exert their power through language and culture. Discourse as defined by Foucault (1974) referred to the rules that govern what can be said and what must remain unsaid, who can speak and who must listen. Foucault identified "regimes of truth" -- dominant discourses which are relational rather than relative.

The relational aspect of language and culture and the power vested in forms of discourse are examined in the work of theorists such as Bourdieu and Bernstein. Bourdieu, for instance, was interested in Gramsci's idea of hegemony and the power of cultures to oppress people. Just as the State has a vested interested in promoting economic capital with which to maintain its economic and political power, it also has an interest in accumulating cultural capital. These are cultural forms upon which a social and economic value is placed. Bourdieu & Passeron (1977) described cultural capital as "ways of talking, acting, modes of style, moving, socializing, forms of knowledge, language practices, and values" (McLaren, 1989, p. 186).

Bernstein (1975) showed how working class students learn "restricted" linguistic codes whilst middle-class children use "elaborated" codes. Bernstein argued that schools generally rewarded students with elaborated codes and devalued students with restricted codes. Teachers, who by and large are drawn from the lower middle classes, often innocently promote this form of cultural oppression. Critical theorists argue that schools must reevaluate the way in which discourse reinforces and oppresses disadvantaged groups in society.

The Process of Critical Thinking

An important feature of critical thinking is the way in which reflection, discussion and action are conceptualized.

Reflection

Kemmis & Fitzclarence (1986) described the concept of dialectical thinking as one that demands constant evaluation and reevaluation as new understandings are reconceptualized. It is the kind of thinking that Giroux, for example, would see as promoting a transformation in teachers' understandings of their working lives. It must be viewed both as illuminating and emancipatory:

> It is an open and questioning form of thinking which demands reflection back and forth between elements like part and whole, knowledge and action, process and product, subject and object, being and becoming, rhetoric and reality, or structure and function. In the process, contradictions may be discovered . . . As contradictions are revealed, new constructive thinking and new constructive action are required to transcend the contradictory state of affairs. The complementarity of the elements is dynamic: it is a kind of tension, not a static confrontation between the two poles. (p.36-37)

Discussion

Another way in which critical educators have sought to transform thinking is through the espousal of pedagogical surrealism. Through discussion they attempt *to make the strange familiar and the familiar strange*. We can see how this can be achieved through a dialectical discourse in which contradictions are transformed into reconceptualisations and new realizations. During discussion, conceptions, assumptions and understandings are challenged. The possibility of other explanations is examined. The strategies for change discussed. Plans of action are debated.

Action

McLaren (1989) discussed the ways in which critical educators act to remove social injustice through action based on reflection. "Critical educators argue that *praxis* (informed actions) must be guided by *phronesis* (the disposition to act truly and rightly). This means, in critical terms, that actions and knowledge must be directed at eliminating pain, oppression and inequality and at promoting justice and freedom" (McLaren, 1989, p. 182).

Critical theorists also emphasize the need to promote a new form of citizenship that promotes communality. Action must be built around a sense of communal responsibility. This is an especially important facet of critical theory for this study because of the way that individual achievement is being promoted through the use of testing and evaluation. Widespread testing in a climate of competition often has the effect of pitting one citizen against another in a race to be best. It is a climate sometimes promoted in the business community in a cut-throat and ruthless way. There is increasing debate about the appropriateness of promoting such a climate in schools. This competitive climate does little to promote social and cultural harmony and nurture concern for the underprivileged. By promoting egotism as opposed to socialism we can lose our sense of community and our responsibility to the those less fortunate than ourselves. Critical theorists believe that schooling for self and social-empowerment is ethically prior and therefore superior to a mastery of technical skills which are primarily tied to the logic of the marketplace. They stress that any genuine pedagogical practice demands a commitment to social transformation in solidarity with subordinated and marginalized groups. This necessarily entails a preferential option for the poor and the elimination of those conditions that promote human suffering. Such theorists are critical of the emphasis that liberal democracy places on individualism and competition rather than sharing and co-operation. (McLaren, 1989, p. 162).

Critical theorists acknowledge the existence of social injustice. They seek to bring about a reconceptualization of knowledge and power, curriculum and culture, competition and community, schooling and society, teacher and student, teaching and learning. Their aim is to redefine the social, economic, political and cultural purpose of education so that the social order is transformed. Within schools they seek to promote the kinds of knowledge, forms of curriculum and definitions of discourse that can bring about the creation of concerned and democratic citizenry. Through engaging in reflection, discussion and action with educators and students they can bring about an emancipatory form of education that both informs and transforms. They believe that knowledge is empowering only when it helps to empower others. Critical educators aim to create "agendas of possibility" in their classrooms. Through a dialectical process teachers can come to understand the construction of their realities and this understanding can form the basis of social transformation.

Research Design: Dialectical Dialogue

The research undertaken in this study is designed to uncover teachers' understandings through the methodology of critical theory, *dialectical dialogue*. Three important concepts underlie this mode of inquiry: emancipatory knowledge, mutual respect and reciprocity.

Emancipatory Knowledge

Following the philosophy of critical pedagogues such as Giroux (1988) and Freire (1988), it is assumed that there is no such thing as neutral education and no such thing as neutral research. As critical thinkers demonstrate, education is usually designed to emphasize particular kinds of knowledge in the interests of particular groups of people. Educational research has tended to follow the same pattern. Practical and technical knowledge have been emphasized often to the virtual exclusion of emancipatory knowledge. Because most major research funds are controlled by government agencies, there has been little incentive to promote emancipatory forms of research. However, the aim of dialectical dialogue is to emphasize emancipatory knowledge. It seeks to raise

> awareness of the contradictions hidden or distorted by everyday understandings, and in doing so it directs attention to the possibilities for social transformation inherent in present configuration of social processes. (Lather, 1986, p. 259)

Lather (1986) has described research methodologies based on the development of emancipatory knowledge as "research as praxis" (1986, p. 258). Following the work of Benson (1983), Lather (1986) defined *praxis* as "the dialectical tension, the interactive, reciprocal shaping of theory and practice which I see as at the center of emancipatory social science" (p. 258). Freire (1988) referred to praxis as "*reflection* and *action* upon the world in order to transform it" (p. 36).

Emancipatory educators aim to foster open-mindedness because they trust the human spirit to redefine its existence in a way that is unique, productive and fulfilling. Just as reflection leads to action so action leads to further reflection. The process of praxis is dynamic rather than static and knows no predetermined boundaries. Emancipatory researchers have respect for the human intellect and its ability to define human existence in ways which may be original and challenging.

Mutual Respect

The respect of all those engaged in the process of praxis is an important part of emancipatory research. It is also probably the path to plot through the uncharted territory of passionate scholarship. When researchers fail to recognize the equal partnership of dialectical dialogue, a distortion occurs in the process of emancipation. For example, Bullough, Goldstein & Holt (1982), in their study of female teachers, noted that they did not "expect the teachers interviewed to either agree with or necessarily understand the inferences which were made from their responses" (p. 133). But if there is no understanding of the inferences of the researcher, the researcher becomes a "majority shareholder" rather than an equal partner (Lather, 1986). The mismatched power/discourse relationship between researcher and respondent denigrates the value of respondents' world views. Freire (1988) commented that "the revolutionary effort to transform . . . structures radically cannot designate its leaders as its thinkers and the oppressed as mere doers" (p. 120).

Emancipatory theory-building is different from grounded theory-building, therefore, because it is open-ended, non-dogmatic, informing, and grounded in the circumstances of everyday life. Moreover, "it must be premised on a deep respect for the intellectual and political capacities of the dispossessed" (Lather, 1986, p. 262). In order for emancipatory knowledge to develop through praxis oriented inquiry there must be mutual respect for the researcher and the respondent.

> For persons, as autonomous beings, have a moral right to participate in decisions that claim to generate knowledge about them. Such a right . . . protects them . . . from being managed and manipulated . . . the moral principle of respect for persons is not fully honored unless power is shared not only in the application . . . but also in the generation of knowledge . . . doing research on persons involves an important educational commitment: to provide conditions under which subjects can enhance their capacity for self-determination in acquiring knowledge about the human condition. (Heron, 1981, pp. 34-35).

Reciprocity

An essential feature, therefore, of dialectical dialogue - the process of praxis - is reciprocity. However, not all attempts at reciprocity will bring about emancipatory praxis. Reciprocity in research design has been used partly to generate rich data (Wax, 1952;

Everhart, 1977) and partly, and not necessarily successfully, to empower the researched. However, the level of reciprocity and the kinds of empowerment that take place are very much dependent on the research design and the way in which respondents participate in the collection and analysis of data.

Laslett & Rapoport (1975) termed their empowerment process "collaborative interviewing and interactive research" (p. 970). They interviewed their respondents at least three times partly to access deeper levels of data and partly to deal with emotional responses better. They also exchanged perceptions of data in order to give ownership to respondents and to aid validity. However, the level of reciprocity was minimal compared with other types of praxis research.

Carr-Hill (1984), for instance, developed a survey couched in the language of respondents interviewed in groups. The collectively generated data was later used by the groups of interested participants to critically analyze their life-stories in evaluation seminars.

An example of maximal reciprocity can be found in the work of Kushner & Norris (1980-81), who developed a research design they called "collaborative theorizing" (p. 27). The goal of this research was to "move people from articulating *what* they know to *theorizing* about what they know" (Lather, 1986, p. 264).

Possible Concerns

Although critical theorists espouse these three concepts in their research there are three biases which may affect their research: dogmatism, balance and false perceptions.

Dogmatism

Post- positivistic research can act as a double edged sword. On the one hand, there can be a conceptual vitality offered by post-positivistic research; on the other hand there is a temptation to flirt with conceptual overdeterminism. In other words, there is always a danger in dialectical dialogue of predetermining the parameters of praxis. Even dialectical dialogue can be constrained by a priori social or political predefinitions. And the potential bias of dialectical dialogue should not be brushed aside flippantly.

In a sense this is an issue of indoctrination. One of the chief criticisms of critical dialogue is that it brings about another form of political oppression, namely dogmatic belief in socialist revolution. The fear of praxis brought about by reflection and action has certainly dogged the career of Freire and many others who have sought to bring about transformation in society. But the charge of indoctrination levelled at emancipatory educators and researchers can be dealt with through philosophical argument.

The aim of indoctrination is to foster close-mindedness. Kleinig (1975) believed, for instance, that the *only* way to determine that indoctrination took place was by examining the state of open or close mindedness of the person who had been indoctrinated. Even when the result of close-mindedness appears to be good, such as when devoted Christians follow the teachings of Jesus and lead godly lives, their close-mindedness must still be considered bad. Why? The answer lies somewhere in the realm of suspicion. To foster close-mindedness affords others the powerful opportunity to decide what goes on in the mind. Favoring open-mindedness is based on a pessimism about the ability of others to do our thinking for us. We live in a society which distributes power unequally. To encourage close-mindedness - indoctrination - legitimates the right of one person to control the mind of the other. To foster that kind of power relationship allows irrational belief to germinate, grow and blossom perennially. For it is a lot easier to indoctrinate than it is to sustain indoctrination. In fact, it can only be sustained through the power of irrational belief in the hands of others.

Critical theorists, therefore, aim not to indoctrinate, but to emancipate through the opening of minds.

Balance

Lather (1986) pointed out that empirically grounded theory required a reciprocal relationship between data and theory. "Data must be allowed to generate propositions in a dialectical manner that permits use of a priori theoretical frameworks, but which keeps a particular framework from becoming the container into which the data is poured" (p. 267). Ramsay (1983) criticized Anyon's (1980, 1981) critical ethnographies of classrooms for indicating more about her predispositions than about the phenomenon studied. By the same token, an overemphasis on eliminating bias for the sake of validity detracts from the purpose of critical research which is to inform and enlighten in an open-ended way. The difficulty is in finding a balance between good intention and good research. Or, as Acker, Barry and Esseveld (1983) noted, "an emancipatory intent is no guarantee of an emancipatory outcome" (p. 431). Lather (1986) described the search for operational reflexivity in critical inquiry as the "struggle for passionate scholarship" (p. 272).

False Perception

The ability to theorize is largely dependent on the ability to extrapolate fact from fiction. Freire (1988) described the problem that sometimes arises during the transition from reflection to action as *false perception*. To experience oppression is not the same as understanding oppression. To realize what oppression is makes it that much worse. In order to emerge from it "the oppressed must confront reality critically, simultaneously objectifying and acting upon the reality. A mere perception of reality not followed by this critical intervention will not lead to a transformation of objective reality - precisely because it is not a true perception" (p. 37). Freire understood the difficulty of the oppressed to either recognize their oppression or emerge from it.

> A different type of false perception occurs when a change in objective reality would threaten the individual or class interests of the perceiver . . . . The fact exists; but both the fact and what may result from it may be prejudicial to him. Thus it becomes necessary, not precisely to deny the fact, but to "see it differently." . . . It ceases to be concrete and becomes a myth created in defense of the class of the perceiver. (p. 37)

Critical theorists know there is no harder battle fought than the one waged between myth and reality.

Methodology

Fay (1977) believed that in critical theory there was a lack of knowledge about "the conditions that must be met if people are going to be in a position to actually consider it [critical theory] as a possible account of their lives" (p. 218). Fay noted (1987) that the "goal of critical theory is not only to facilitate methodical self-reflection necessary to produce rational clarity, but to dissolve those barriers which prevent people from living in accordance with their genuine will" (p. 75). Fay (1987) describes the removal of these barriers as "collective autonomy" (p. 76).

The research methodology of this study followed as much as possible the procedures identified by Lather (1986) and Fay (1988) as necessary to attaining full reciprocity and autonomy: dialogical disclosure and reflection.

The first step in critical inquiry is to set up a dialogic situation where respondents are actively involved in the construction and validation of meaning. The purpose of this design is to draw out accounts of respondents' lives which act as a corrective to the "investigator's preconceptions regarding the subject's life-world and experiences" (Comstock, 1982, p. 381).

The next step is to challenge the "naturalness" of social arrangements. This is achieved through a process of mutual reflection. The researcher's and respondent's life-world experiences are examined against an historical backdrop. The constraints upon and possibilities for change are explored.

A feature of this mutual reflection is the focus on fundamental contradictions. These emerge as experiences which are conceptualized, reflected upon and reconceptualized. It is an important role of the emancipatory researcher to draw up contradictory and conflicting perceptions and to identify what Willis (1977) has called "partial penetrations". These are incomplete understandings of cultural contradictions, which nevertheless provide a useful focus for further reflection.

An essential feature of the process of social transformation and emancipation is autonomous control. By this, critical theorists mean that participants in the process of praxis must be given the opportunity to develop their own understandings of how, why, when and where change takes place. Bernstein (1983) described the research process which brings about autonomous decision making as "enabling". Research which seeks to encourage change without the full complicity and understanding of the respondent was referred to by Bernstein (1983) as "blinding" bias (p. 128).

Validation of the Data

Dialogical Disclosures

Lather (1986) believed that interviews should be conducted in an interactive, dialogic manner, requiring disclosure on the part of the researcher: that interviewers should be willing to answer respondent's questions about the interviewer's own life rather than deflect them: that sequential interviews should facilitate collaboration and deeper probing of research issues. Meanings should be negotiated. At a minimum, this would entail recycling description, emerging analysis, and conclusions to at least a sub-sample of respondents.

Lather (1986) advocated discussions of false consciousness that went beyond simply encouraging people to listen more carefully to Marxist interpretations. As a non-dogmatic form of dialogue researchers engaged in praxis should be conscious of and seek to undermine the pervasive power of illusion and myth in people's lives in a constructive and sensitive way and without any doctrinal mission.

> There is a dialectic between people's understandings and researcher efforts to create a context which enables a questioning of both taken-for-granted beliefs and the authority that culture has over us (Bowers, 1984). There, in the nexus of that dialectic, lies the opportunity to create reciprocal, dialogic research designs which not only lead to self-reflection but also provide a forum in which to test the usefulness, the resonance of conceptual and theoretical formulation. (Lather, 1986, p. 266)

In this study audio taped conversations were held with the participants in two series: the first involved 4 teachers and focused on their understandings of the Key Stage 1 testing and assessment process in January and February of 1991. An untaped conversation also took place with one of the later participants. The second series, in June and July, 1991 followed administration of the SATs tests and involved 13 teachers in all. Each conversation lasted approximately one and a half hours and was open ended and minimally structured in order to provide maximum opportunity for participants to direct the discussion. All participants were contacted again either by phone or personally in December, 1991 or January, 1992, and again in July, 1992.

Audio tapes were returned to participants after round two and before they were contacted at the end of 1991 and the beginning of 1992. This provided them with an opportunity to review what they had said, clarify statements, make additions or request deletions. The actual school and class sites of 4 teachers were observed. Conversations normally took place outside the schools. Only one taped conversation took place in the teacher's classroom. Meeting teachers outside school helped the discussion and reflection to take place in a relatively relaxed environment. Participants were free to opt out of the research process at any time. None chose to do so. Their anonymity and the confidentiality of the conversations were guaranteed.

Participants

Participants were selected firstly because they were able and willing to describe the impact of the assessment policy on their lives. They also had shown an understanding of professionalism and, therefore, were able to reflect on personal and professional meanings in their working lives. Participants had a knowledge of the 1988 Education Reform Act and how it was to be implemented in schools.

Participants were selected in a variety of ways. Some participants were chosen because I knew them or they had been recommended to me through my own teaching contacts. Others were contacted through my own teachers' union. Even though the number of participants is small, data collected through critical inquiry is rich and therefore must be kept manageable. As there is no attempt in critical inquiry to extrapolate universalities but rather to engage in a process of praxis, the number of participants must be also kept low as the process of praxis is both intimate and open-ended. Adequate time must be given to each participant before, during and after dialogue in order that the process of praxis can be meaningful.

Participants were selected only if they were currently engaged in the administration of Key Stage 1 Assessment. As the purpose of this research was to better understand the relationship between policy and practice and the effect of policy on teachers' working lives, teachers not directly involved with testing were able to provide elaborative data, but they were not directly involved in the praxis process. Most of the teachers chosen had been teaching for more than 10 years. However, efforts were made to ensure that at least two participants were in their first three years of teaching. Teachers were selected from around Britain. At least two participants taught in Wales because the assessment procedures there also involve tests in Welsh. The principle for selection, therefore, was based on the belief that the greater the variety of participants the greater the likelihood of rich data. Unfortunately, I was unable to recruit any male teachers as participants. No males responded to my advertisment in the teacher union newspaper and none were recommended to me. However, in 1991 I taught occasionally in London and did find two male teachers involved with Key Stage 1 testing, one in Tower Hamlets in the East End of London and one in Haringey. However, neither was willing to participate in the study.

Methodological Challenges

In critical research the trustworthiness and rigor of data is open to challenge because of the openly biased position of the researcher during the process of praxis. How does the critical educator maximize the researcher's mediation between people's self-understandings and transformative social action without becoming impositional?

In order to minimize the effect of personal bias, Lather (1986) suggested that the best tactic was vigorous self-reflexivity. Going beyond predisposition requires new techniques and concepts for obtaining and defining trustworthy data. Lather (1986) offered four ways in which data could be validated as trustworthy and rigorous: voluntary participation, triangulation, construct validity and catalytic validity.

Voluntary Participation

Fay (1975) pointed out that in order for theory to explain the structural contradictions at the heart of discontent it must be intelligible to those groups engaged in praxis otherwise they are unable to participate in its construction and validation. The best way to avoid cultural imposition is to mutually respect divergent cultures. Using imposed language is a fruitless and self-defeating exercise because it is laden with culturally exclusive meanings. The purpose of critical inquiry is to lay bare the foundations of social injustice in such a way as to bring about an hegemonic crisis.

> The development of emancipatory social theory requires an empirical stance which is open-ended, dialogically reciprocal, grounded in respect for human capacity, and yet profoundly skeptical of appearances and "common sense". Such an empirical stance is, furthermore, rooted in a commitment to the long-term, broad-based ideological struggle to transform structural inequalities. (Lather, 1986, p. 269)

The purpose of emancipatory research, therefore, must be fully disclosed to participants in order for their participation to be truly voluntary. Without this disclosure the process of praxis cannot take place.

Triangulation

Triangulation must be utilized to "allow counterpatterns as well as convergence" to emerge (p. 270). Opportunities must be built into the research design that allow for different conclusions and different data. This can be achieved by using multiple data sources and a variety of methodologies and analytical tools. Conversations, for example, might be arranged in different ways; between participant and researcher, informally and formally, taped and notated. Data can be collected by visiting work-places, talking with management personnel, visiting government offices, speaking with trade unionists, attending conferences and seminars, comparing data with fellow researchers and through a variety of other means. The more sources there are the richer the data will be and the wider the opportunities for interpretation.

I chose to describe the data collected outside the participant conversations as elaborative data. This included a somewhat overwhelming quantity of government publications and documents; attendance at a conference of Key Stage 1 teachers organized by my own teacher union; attendance at seminars with fellow researchers involved in Key Stage 1 testing; visits to government offices including a discussion with the civil servant in the Department of Education responsible for governemnt publications dealing with Key Stage 1 testing; a number of visits to the offices of SEAC where I was able to meet with staff involved in the preparation of the tests; conversations with many teachers in Haringey through union meetings; conversations with senior education officers in Haringey involved in the administration of the tests; conversations with teachers in schools that I visited during the period of this research; visits to newspaper libraries to keep abreast of developments around the country; finally, working occasionally as a supply teacher in primary schools in London during 1991.

Construct Validity

Construct validity is usually thought of as the extent to which a particular test can be shown to measure a hypothetical construct (APA, 1985). In critical inquiry it means whether the theoretical context in which the research is operating is driving the data or is a development of it. Lather (1986) pointed out that the critical researcher must work in a conscious context of theory building. Researchers must constantly seek out the weak points of theory. They must also gain a focus on the purpose of the research. Is theory being extended, corroborated or revised?

> Determining that constructs are actually occurring, rather than they are merely inventions of the researcher's perspective, requires a self-critical attitude toward how one's own preconceptions affect the research . . . A systemized reflexivity which reveals how a priori theory has been changed by the logic of data becomes essential in establishing construct validity in ways that contribute to the growth of illuminating and change enhancing social theory. (Lather, 1986, p. 271)

Catalytic Validity

Face Validity refers to the face value of data. Is it believable? In critical inquiry, face validity is regarded as a complex and intricate construct chiefly because of the acknowledgement of false-consciousness. Critical researchers are reluctant to acknowledge the "truth" of a statement because their purpose is to unravel the multiple meanings of that truth. Lather (1986) noted the difficulty of building face validity into a critical mode of inquiry. Much of the face validity of emancipatory research data is dependent on the sensitivity and enlightened subjectivity of the data collector.

Lather (1986) suggested as an alternative to face validity, catalytic validity. This is based on the concept of conscientization developed by Freire (1973). Catalytic validity represents the degree to which participants engage in and benefit from praxis. This can only be judged by the participants themselves.

From Theory into Practice

Theoretically I was excited at the prospect of engaging in what seemed to me to be a radical exercise in data gathering. Not only was I to have the opportunity to glean rich data, I had the chance to engage in critical reflection and raise awareness of policy issues with my participants. However, it was with some trepidation that I embarked on the exercise. After all, I was new to this style of research and I was only too aware of the pitfalls. What if the participants found this research project too intrusive? Supposing they became upset with the constant questioning of purpose and motivation. How would they deal with their own contradictory and conflicting statements? How available could I really be to address their concerns when I would be returning to Canada shortly after each round of conversations? How reciprocal could these conversations be when I, the researcher, was no longer in the classroom facing the escalating daily challenges of British teachers. How good a listener would I be? Would I talk too much? Could I deal with my own biases in an honest and frank way without influencing the opinions of the participants? How much trust could develop between myself and the teachers who barely knew me before this research started? How would I organise my visits around Britain in such a way that all the conversations would be finished before I had to return to Canada?

My fears were well founded. Although I found the taped conversations rich in data, I never completely relaxed while I talked with the teachers. I found I had to concentrate extremely hard to identify the nuances, the contradictory statements, the repetitive comments, the denials, the concerns, the stresses. There was always concern over time. I worried that the teachers I spoke with had already worked a long, hard day (I never met with teachers at the week-ends) and I did not want to keep them up too late. Yet the teachers I spoke with showed no such concern. More often than not they wanted to talk for twice as long as the tapes I installed. However, *I* often had a long drive ahead of me that night, so it wasn't always possible for *me* to stay too late and then *I* felt guilty!.

I quickly realised that this kind of research was exhausting. I worried constantly that the teachers I worked with were comfortable with the kinds of conversations we had. Was I being too intrusive? The teachers told me I was not. Was I creating additional stress? Teachers said I was helping to relieve it! Did I talk too much? At first, I'm sure I did. I always listened to the conversations as soon as I could after they were taped and chastised myself for missing important clues. I found myself enjoying these conversations too much. I had to learn to listen! After all, I had been a pretty militant trade unionist before I became an emancipatory researcher! Thankfully, I learned and, as the weeks wore on, there was also a discernible shift in the way the dialogue developed.

Apart from anything else, early conversations often became bogged down in the minutae of testing and although this was informative, there was often insufficient time to move on to broader issues. In the beginning we were all learning. None of us really knew what was going on because instructions and information changed daily. This was interesting in itself, and was certainly a demonstration of the stress we were all under. But as the year passed, we all had a better understanding of the process and it became much easier to talk about "How do I feel?" instead of "What do I do?"

The teachers seemed to trust me. Perhaps this was because of the way they had become participants. There was always a link, either with a friend or with the teachers' union. Right from the start they would whisper conspiratorially, "Now, you won't tell anyone, will you?" And then tell me exactly what was on their minds. It seemed to me that they were keen to unburden themselves on to someone who would understand what they were saying. I think they hoped I could do something about their situation. I worried about this. What could I do for them other than be a good listener? I hoped I could help them come to understand what they could do for themselves!

I had promised the National Association of Schoolmaster/Union of Women Techers (NAS/UWT) that I would produce an article for them in return for their help in looking for volunteers. This was published in the Fall of 1991 and all the participants told me they had read it. They seemed really pleased that something had come out of our work together.

How reciprocal were the conversations? Well, I have listened to them many times, and I believe that these really were conversations and not interviews. Yes, it's true, I guided the praxis along by asking challenging questions, but so did my participants. Often they challenged themselves. These were not one sided conversations. I think a certain solidarity grew up between us. I, the sympathetic teacher/researcher, they the somewhat unwilling victims of a government imposed policy. I take some comfort in the knowledge that in 1993, anyway, the tests they disliked so much did not take place because the teachers in Britain boycotted them.

Ethical Considerations

In accordance with the University of Alberta requirements this research proposal was submitted for review by the Ethics Review Committee of the Department of Educational Administration. Permission to undertake research was sought from all participating schools and where necessary, local authorities. Participants had the opportunity to opt out of the research process at any time. Copies of tapes were returned to participants and they had the opportunity to comment upon and withdraw any comments they made. Anonymity and confidentiality were assured.

Chapter 3

Literature Review

The focus of this research was to explore the perceptions of teachers engaged in implementing the 1988 Education Reform Act. The three issues which were of most concern in this study were policy implementation, the effects of mandated testing on teachers and learning and what it means to be a professional.

Policy Implementation

Political Backround

Holdaway (1990) examined recent reforms in a number of educational systems including the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Hawaii, and New South Wales, Australia. The over-riding feature of these attempts at re-organization has been that the power of central government and schools has increased and that of local authorities decreased. Guthrie, Pierce and Koppich (1990) have concluded that the United Kingdom, the United States and other industrialized nations have adopted a model of education which contains the following general features:

> A national curriculum, with more weight to mathematics, science and foreign languages.
>
> Devolution to schools of operational decision-making authority.
>
> Greater use of performance tests for accountability.
>
> Emphasis on teacher training and professionalism, and expansion of access and life-long learning incentives for higher education programs (p.16).

Guthrie, Pierce and Koppich (1990) have pointed out that in both the United States and Britain the government's reforms have arisen from an aggressive market driven economy. However, many of these governments' education policies contain contradictory proposals. Democratic schooling and equal opportunity are promoted alongside what would seem to be the contradictory policy of promoting parental choice and selective schooling on the basis of ability to pay. It is important to note, therefore, that whilst governments may claim to be reforming education in the interests of the economy there are many, like Simon (1988) for instance, who have argued the need to constrain and control an increasingly militant working class and to constrain an increasingly militant teaching profession.

Holmes and Ormston (1990, p. 22) have identified the significant features of what they describe as the new culture of schooling:

(a) Schools as a competitive entity in a fluid market.
(b) A universal curriculum with wide diversity in curriculum delivery.
(c) A web of accountability mechanisms.
(d) An entrepreneurial emphasis for managers.
(e) An increased emphasis upon administration at the school level.
(f) Few policy layers between central government and schools.
(g) A focus on the quality of management as the prime determinant of a school's success.

They pointed out that "taken together, this culture is clearly that of business" (p. 22).

Apple in *Education and Power* (1982) explained how this market culture destroyed the notion of democratic schooling. He wrote:

> The common ground of the school becomes no longer based on a set of democratic political commitments; rather it is replaced by the ideal of a

> competitive marketplace. The citizen as member, as a political being with reciprocal rights and duties, is lost. In its place is the self as consumer. Here, schooling becomes one more "retail product" like all others. Freedom in a democracy is no longer defined as participating in building the common good, but as living in an unfettered commercial market, with the educational system now being seen as needing to be integrated into the mechanisms of such a market. (p. 106)

Troman (1989) has demonstrated how the demands of the market versus the demands of democratic schooling have created a tension in the testing policies in Britain. The market philosophy required a quantitative and summative form of measurement; the democratic principle required a qualitative, formative form of measurement. The assessment structure adopted by the British government had contradictory aims and therefore was likely to create difficulties during implementation.

Policy Implementation

Implementation refers to a process of carrying out a policy or program decision (Berman, 1978; Pressman and Wildavesky, 1979; Williams, 1976). It is generally agreed that the process of policy implementation is technically simple, but socially complex (Berman & McLaughlin, 1976; Fullan, 1982; Hall, 1985). Britain's testing policy, for example, required teachers to follow centrally dictated explicit instructions regarding tests and deadlines. However, implementation is not that simple. There is a considerable gap between policy formulators and policy implementors. McLaughlin (1987) explained that

> change is ultimately the problem of the smallest unit. At each point in the policy process a policy is transformed as individuals interpret and respond to it. What is actually delivered or provided under the aegis of a policy depends finally on the individual at the end of the line. (p. 174)

The power to determine the impact of policy lies ultimately at the local level and not at the policy formulation level. Pressman and Wildavsky (1973) stressed this point when they noted that "the consequences of even the best planned, best supported, and most promising policy initiatives depends finally on what happens as individuals throughout the policy system interpret and act on them." Therefore, "policy at best can enable outcomes, but in the final analysis it cannot mandate what counts" (McLaughlin, 1987, p. 173).

Bosetti (1990) has identified three stages in the implementation process: initiation or adoption, implementation and continuation or routinization. As well, activity in a later stage of the implementation process may alter decisions taken in the previous stages (Fullan, 1982; Berman and McLaughlin, 1976).

Adoption

Fullan (1982) identified ten critical factors that influence the adoption of an innovation: 1) existence and quality of innovation, 2) access to information, 3) advocacy from central administration, 4) teacher pressure/support, 5) consultants and change agents, 6) community pressure/support/apathy/opposition, 7) availability of federal or provincial funds, 8) new central legislation or policy, 9) problem-solving incentive for adoption and 10) bureaucratic incentives for adoption (p. 42).

Implementation (Adaption and Clarification)

Conner and Patterson (1983) referred to the implementation phase as the commitment phase. They divided this into four stages: installation, adoption, institutionalization and internalization. Once organizational members were disposed towards adopting the policy they took steps to make it work. The transitional phase known as the "commitment threshold" (p. 4) involved a trial period of implementation during which the implications of the change would be assessed. Fullan (1982) described the decision making process during the transitional phase as a complex analysis of policy implications: Did the policy address priority needs? Are the goals clearly stated? Are the barriers to implementation fully appreciated? Are the necessary resources available ?(p. 59). In addition factors such as the school district's history of policy implementation, and the probability of resocialization of organizational actors has to be taken into account. Finally, the relationship between central government and local authorities and the financial arrangements between the two are crucial in this critical stage of implementation.

Incorporation

Elmore (1978) identified the problem of translating top-down policy into everyday practice as one of distant autonomy. The crucial factors that affect the behavior of implementors are beyond the direct control of management and include the "individual motivation and commitment, and the interaction and mutual support of people in work groups" (p. 215). Policy is not translated into practice unless implementors have "shaped it and claimed it for their own: the result is a consensus reflecting the initial intent of policy makers and the independent judgement of implementors" (Elmore, 1978, p. 216).

Implementation Strategies

Berman (1980) believed that implementation strategies should match different contextual conditions. Elmore (1978) identified four kinds of organizational models that affect implementation strategy: systems, bureaucratic, organizational development and conflict and bargaining.

The systems model is hierarchical and bureaucratic. Implementation is dependent upon tight control of organization members. There are few examples of such a model in policy implementation literature (Bosetti, 1990).

The bureaucratic model as define by Elmore (1978) involves the co-option of "street-level bureaucrats" (p. 202). These are the managers charged with the onerous task of creating "some semblance of order and stability on an otherwise unpredictable and dynamic social environment" (Bosetti, 1990,p. 25). This is difficult. Lieberman (1982) noted that when workloads are increased and established routines disrupted street-level bureaucrats are faced with resistance. Adjustments to take into account changing work demands are often impossible to bring about.

The organizational development model is based on the assumption that policy implementors are involved in policy formulation. Berman and McLaughlin (1976) referred to this strategy as mutual adaptation. Bosetti (1990) described this as "a process of shaping a policy to meet the needs and values of the particular organizational setting, and at the same time, the organization and its members adapt to the demands of the innovation" (p. 27). This model, however, is heavily dependent on attributes such as consensus and cooperation. It does not take into account the possibility of conflict, nor the breakdown in consensus.

The conflict and bargaining model is characterized by the struggle to maintain a balance between centralized and decentralized control of the implementation process. Implementation becomes a series of strategic moves by individual subgroups to meet their own ends. Implementation failure is the result of the lack of power of any single subunit to coerce or persuade the others to conform to a single conception of the policy (Bosetti, 1990, p. 28). In this model there are few winners and a lot of losers. As consensus rarely takes place, and conflict is rife, much time is expended in dealing with disputes that have little to do with the policy being implemented. Thus policy is marginalized away from the arena of conflict.

Variables Affecting Implementation

Citing the work of O'Toole (1986), Vanhorne and Van Meter (1977), Berman and McLaughlin (1976) and Sabatier and Mazmanian (1980) and Fullan (1982), Bosetti (1990, pp. 30-31) summarized the critical factors affecting policy implementation as clarity of communication; complexity of the policy; how policy formulators and implementors see the need or relevance for change and the quality of the policy itself; enforcement procedures; the disposition of implementors; the characteristic and history of implementing agencies; time-lines and environmental conditions.

Bosetti's (1990) summary demonstrates the complexity of the implementation process. Of particular interest to this study are the comments, for example, of Fullan (1982) in relation to enforcement and Van Horn and Van Meter (1975) in relation to environmental conditions. Fullan pointed out that while governments might be legally reponsible for ensuring compliance of their policies, they must also devolve some reponsibility to local agencies and ultimately this can can impede the facilitation of implementation through surveillance overload.

> it requires tremendous energy to find out what is happening: the more preoccupied governments become with surveillance in such a situation the more energy must be spent at all levels on administrative paperwork, reporting and other compliance type information. (p.251)

He added that too much attention to compliance can divert attention and resources away from making improvements to the policy and providing support and guidance for future efforts.

Van Horne and Van Meter identified six issues related to environmental conditions.

> Are economic resources available within the implementing jurisdiction (or organizational) sufficient to support successful implementation?
>
> To what extent (and how) will prevailing economic and social conditions be affected by the implementation of the policy in question?
>
> What is the nature of public opinion: how salient is the related policy issue?
>
> Do elites favor or oppose implementation of the policy?
>
> To what extent are private interest groups mobilized in support or opposition to the policy? (p.472)

All the researchers referred to above point to the importance of front line personnel in successfully bringing about change. In the case of teachers, an important feature of their compliance is the way in which they view their role as a professional within the larger educational context. It is useful, therefore, to explore how teachers weigh legislative requirements against their understandings of what it means to be a professional.

Professionalism and the Nature of Teachers' Work

A profession has been described as

> a work group that has acquired a legal monopoly over expertise associated with an abstract body of knowledge. It can police members and control licensing standards. And it endorses independent occupational norms that may be in conflict with certain policies and practices of the work organizations that employ members of the profession. (Corwin and Borman, 1988, p. 221)

The conflicting interests of teachers within educational organizations are an implicit part of what it means to be a teaching professional. However, investigations of the way teachers view their professional lives have tended not to deal with this conflict. In a broad field of research which includes the psychology, sociology, philosophy, culture and economics of professionalism as well as research on gender issues, there is little research on the way that teachers mediate the conflicting demands of the school, the State and themselves.

Huberman's (1989) survey of research on teachers' professional lives deals mostly with life-cycle studies. Huberman and Prick (1989) suggested that common patterns were emerging in this research: there are seasons in the professional lives of teachers; there are appropriate or favorable moments for carrying out specific tasks, and that there are qualitatively different ways of "orienting toward one's career at different points" (p. 461).

Nias (1989) has examined the way female teachers develop parallel careers outside teaching through which they found personal significance, self-esteem and self-extension. In a summary of her work (1989b) she wrote:

> However, the decision on the part of such teachers to pursue a parallel career carried its own problems with it, for the extent of the satisfaction they subsequently experienced seem to depend upon their capacity to 'juggle' their competing interests (Pollard, 1982; Sikes et al., 1985; Spencer, 1986) or to build 'bridging' devices between them. (Woods, 1981). (p. 399)

Other authors (Acker, 1989; De Lyon & Widdowson, 1989; Steedman, 1988) have examined the gender issues surrounding women teachers' lives. Steedman (1988) has claimed, for instance, that teaching is a version of mothering and an opportunity for women to fulfil their "real role", that is as mother, within a system of wage labor. Nias (1989) has demonstrated that the role of mother is only one of a complexity of roles played out by women in classrooms. Nias has conceptualized the women teachers' psyche as being double-faceted. On the one hand teachers have a "substantial self" which is formulated early in life; is deeply embedded in personality; is often confirmed in non-verbal ways and is therefore difficult to articulate and difficult to penetrate or change. On the other hand, women teachers have "situational selves" which protect the "substantial self" and act as defense mechanisms against structural changes that threaten the teachers' deep beliefs.

> There are many lesson that one might draw from this, but the main message is that it is the teachers' substantial selves that must be aimed at for substantial change, and these are not changed easily. They may contain sexist, racist etc. elements, and/or/ may be fashioned on traditional stereotypes either to personal advantage or disadvantage. Whole belief-systems, life-worlds and situational strategies accompany them designed in part to resist penetration by argument and exhortation. (Woods, 1990, p. 107)

Teaching as Work

Some researchers (Lawn & Grace, 1987; Ozga, 1988; Popkewitz, 1987) have focused on the labor process of teaching. Instead of seeing teaching as a rarified and autonomous professional activity, they have viewed it as a cultural and political activity closely linked with the economic and political aims of the State. Because of this perception, teachers' work is seen both as being controlled and controlling. Viewing teaching as a labor process brings into focus those aspects of organizations and work-places which undermine autonomy and emphasize control. Authors such as Apple (1986), Ginsburg (1988), Ozga (1981, 1987), have examined those aspects of teachers' work which have been eroded in order to increase administrative control over teachers' working lives. There are three concepts commonly discussed: proletarianization, de-skilling and intensification.

Proletarianization

The original concept of proletarianization was first developed by Braverman (1974). It is usually thought of as the process whereby parts of the middle class become effectively absorbed into the working class through a change in working conditions (Abercrombie and Urry, 1983). Proletarianization of action must be distinguished from proletarianization of condition. The former usually refers to voting behavior and trade union activity; the latter is determined by market, work or status considerations. The more closely white-collar workers' pay, holidays, opportunities for promotion, fringe benefits, relationship with employers, autonomy at work and status in the community approach that of manual workers, the more proletarianized they are deemed to have become (Abercrombie and Urry, 1983).

Deskilling

The noticeable shift of control in education from the classroom to the State has been documented by a number of authors including Apple (1988), Giroux (1989), and Ozga (1988). This process of closely controlling teachers' work has been associated with the concept of proletarianization and deskilling. Apple (1988) described the process of deskilling as a technical and political concept. Over a period of time, skills employees have developed are broken down into smaller and smaller units eventually being appropriated by management to enhance efficiency and claim control of the labor process.

> Workers' control over timing, over defining acceptable performance are all slowly taken on as the prerogatives of management personnel who are usually divorced from the actual place in which the work is carried out. Deskilling, then, often leads to the atrophy of valuable skills that workers possessed, since there is no longer any 'need' for them, in the redefined labor process. The loss of control, of proletarianization of a job, is hence part of a larger dynamic in the separation of conception from execution and

> the continuing attempt by management in the state and industry to rationalize as many aspects of one's labor as possible. p. 209).

Apple (1988) was particularly interested in how fragmentation of work can cause teachers to be so busy, they have no time to think about what they are doing. This feature of labor control has come to be known as *intensification.*

Intensification

Apple (1989), Giroux (1988), Ozga and Lawn (1986) have also identified intensification as a product of increased pressure on teachers through government intervention. If teachers are unable to resist the demands of legislation getting done becomes more important than how it is done. Apple (1989) described the process of intensification as follows:

> There is so much to do that simply accomplishing what is specified requires nearly all of women's efforts. "The challenge of the work day (or week) was to accomplish the required number of objectives." As one teacher put it, "I just want to get this done. I don't have time to be creative or imaginative" (Apple, 1989, p.44)

Apple commented on the fact the teachers sometimes misrecognize their zeal as renewed professionalism.

> While these examples document the active role of teachers in attempting to win back some time, to resist the loss of control of their own work, and to slow down the pace at which students and they were to proceed, the way this is done is not necessarily very powerful. In these instances, time was fought for simply to relax, if only for a few minutes. The process of control, in the increasing technicalization and intensification of the teaching act, the proletarianization of their work - all of this was an absent presence. It was misrecognized as a symbol of their increased professionalism. (1989, p.45)

In England, Hilsun and Cane (1971), examined the erosion of teaching time by routine administrative tasks. More recently The Assistant Masters and Mistresses

Association (AMMA), a medium sized teacher union in Britain, commissioned a study from Campbell and Neill of Warwick University on the time teachers took in 1990 to administer the Key Stage 1 pilot SATs. This report, *Thirteen Hundred and Thirty Days*, noted that there was already considerable evidence of overwork by primary teachers. HMI Inspectors published a report in early 1990 called *The Implementation of the National Curriculum in Primary Schools: A Survey of 100 Schools*. They noted that even the teachers they considered to be the most effective classroom managers were "finding it difficult to create enough time" for observation, assessment and intervention (para. 5a). Campbell and Neill (1990) asked each of the 95 teachers in their study to keep a record of their working day from 7.00 a.m. to midnight for 14 days. They collected detailed records, therefore, of 1330 teaching days. Their study showed that more than half the participants worked more than 50 hours a week and 10 were working more than 60 hours a week. Yet time was not the only issue raised by this study. Teaches with large classes, that is, more than 25, believed that class size was more of a problem than lack of time. As class size grew so did this perception. Campbell and Neill concluded that lack of time within the school day was perceived as the major obstacle to effective implementation of the national curriculum and assessment. This research was repeated in 1991 and results were similar.

Ozga and Lawn (1981, 1986, 1987 and 1988) have argued that teachers, especially in primary schools have been consistently deskilled because of the demands of curriculum innovation.

> Many workers disagree with the processes and ideas they are asked to operate. They have no choice but to fulfil them though they also resist them - by controlling the pace of work, by disputing management's right to manage, by striking. Much of the curriculum innovation literature discusses the resistance by teachers to outside productivity innovations -

> regardless of the content of the innovation, its form is seen as determining. Curriculum innovation is a deliberate and faster form of a process which has been going on for a long time - the deskilling of teachers. (1981, p. 142)

Apple (1981) wrote in much the same vein:

> Skills that teachers used to need, that were deemed essential to the craft of working with children, such as curriculum deliberation and planning, designing teaching and curricular strategies for specific groups and individuals based on intimate knowledge of these people - are no longer necessary. (p. 65)

Apple was writing in response to a rapidly expanding market in pre-packaged materials in American schools. However, there are a number of writers who have viewed these developments positively. Buswell (1988), for example, has questioned the extent to which teachers relinquish control of their school day in this way. She believed that teachers often used packages to supplement or enhance their own programs and that this was particularly useful in implementing new technologically based curricula. Derber (1982) argued that teachers, even if they are technologically proletarianized are not necessarily ideologically proletarianized. Densmore (1987) pointed out that key forms of proletarianization, job specialization, fragmentation, deskilling and intensification have both ideological and technical aspects. "The technical division of labor among educators occurs within a hierarchical context in which fundamental control over the teaching process rests with the upper levels of the hierarchy, not with the teachers themselves" (p. 153).

Two aspects of teachers' work seem especially important for the purposes of this research. Teachers in primary classrooms have traditionally worked alone and they have also been predominantly female. Apple (1988), for example, felt that the feminization of the teaching profession was especially important in trying to understand teachers' work because women create a different work environment. Feminist historians (Eisenstein, 1984, Purvis, 1981; Wolpe, 1978) have commented on the fact that the working role of women was defined within patriarchal structures. As the feminization of the teaching profession grew women exchanged the private life of the kitchen for the public life of the classroom. Once they got there, the public classroom became a private sanctuary which was ruled behind closed doors. This was how the transition from the private to the public realm of work was bridged and how women worked to maintain their autonomy (Apple, 1983; Acker, 1983). The questions posed by this analysis focus on how female teachers reacted to the erosion of their classroom independence.

Simon (1988) pointed out that since the passing of the Reform Act, school governors and HMI inspectors will be asked to enforce legislation. Local authority advisors will be asked to police curriculum instead of assist development of curriculum and teachers will be under constant scrutiny to "deliver" the results expected from the curriculum (p. 147). The "closed" door of the teaching world was being forcibly opened. Although the Act allowed teachers to determine the details and delivery methods of the curriculum, teachers were constrained in terms of how they constructed their working day. They could decide ***when*** they could do something, but not ***what*** it was they should do. This became especially apparent once teacher assessment was fully implemented. As Simon (1988) said,

> All (maintained) schools, throughout the country are to follow the same 'programmes', directed to the same 'attainment targets' and assessed by the same instruments and the same 'nationally prescribed tests'. Is this not a formula for the production of a paralyzing uniformity among all schools - except of course, the independent schools (to which, as Jack Straw has shown, members of the Cabinet, without exception, send their children? . . . The 'National Curriculum' (not actually 'national') seems, from this angle, very much like a means of control of 'the masses' (other people's children). (p.148)

The Education Reform Act, however, can be seen not just as a means of controlling children it can also be seen as a means of controlling teachers. The control of teachers versus teacher control has long been a thorny issue in debates over schooling. However, as we shall see from the survey of literature below, teacher autonomy, whilst it might enhance teacher professionalism, is not always what teachers want, nor is it necessarily a good thing.

Teacher Professionalism and Autonomy

The Traditional Autonomy of Teachers

The concept of teacher autonomy is one which has been analyzed by organization theorists in education and by educational philosophers, sociologists and anthropologists. Views about autonomy and control vary according to the writer's concept of the teachers' role and, indeed, the way that teachers' view their own role. The views on teacher autonomy, therefore, are often paradoxical and contradictory. However, most writers have agreed that the autonomy enjoyed by teachers is usually restricted to their activities in the classroom (Anderson, 1987). This is because teachers have been relatively isolated from their colleagues. This isolation has been cited as an example of what theorists have come to see as "structural looseness" (Bidwell, 1965). Weick (1976) later coined the phrase "loose-coupling" to describe the semi-autonomous nature of many organizations and both Lortie(1975) and Meyer and Rowan(1978) have attempted to document the "loosely-coupled" nature of schools and school systems. Leon, Nason, Omari, Bastos and Blumberg (1982), in their cross-cultural study of teacher autonomy found that

> teaching everywhere is an activity which enjoys a fair amount of autonomy. It should not be surprising, for teaching everywhere is performed under similar structural conditions: the formal structure of most schools leads teacher to work in isolation in self-contained classrooms. (p. 20)

Leon et al (1982) conducted their work before the widespread introduction of state testing programmes in the United States. By 1986 Apple and Teitlebaum (1986) had identified state-wide competency testing in almost 40 states in the United States. We can only speculate as to what Leon would find if he repeated his study today. Research undertaken to assess teachers' feelings of isolation since the introduction of mandated testing has resulted in a variety of responses. Some teachers feel more comfortable with structured teaching days, others feel suffocated by it. Some teachers feel empowered by the freedom they are given, others feel unappreciated, aimless, and disenchanted. The negative feelings brought about by unfettered teacher autonomy have been well documented.

Problems Associated with Teacher Autonomy

There are a number of problems associated with teacher autonomy. McLaughlin, Pfeifer, Swanson-Owens, and Yee (1986) have identified three: isolation and stress, disenchantment and alienation and resistance to meaningful change.

Isolation and Stress

Two of the features of working life that contribute to stress are lack of self esteem and social worth. Ginsberg and Bennett (1981) found that teachers who believed that their low status had led to stress experienced feelings of isolation and a belief that no-one cared about them or the work they did. Another aspect of stress, brought about by lack of esteem and social worth is a sense of powerlessness. Psychologists describe motivation in terms of locus of control.

> Highly motivated people have an internalized locus of control. Individuals who develop an externalized locus of control . . . do not feel on top of

> things. They have no confidence that what they will do will make any difference. They feel pushed about by forces, benevolent or benign. They are fatalistic. they feel that other people are in charge. Such people lack the motivation to work hard, to learn, to change. (Fymier, 1987, p.12)

Lortie (1986) in his study of teacher status in Dade County commented on the fact that teachers were generally poorly paid. Because of this, the respect they expected as one of the rewards of teaching was no longer evident. At the time of this study, teachers in Britain had expressed the same feelings (The Independent, 10.12.90, p. 8). Salaries had failed to keep up with inflation, negotiating rights had been withdrawn through government legislation, and the public image of teaching had deteriorated to the point that some cities in Britain and many colleges of education could no longer attract qualified students or teachers (Times Educational Supplement, 14.12.90). The situation has changed dramatically, however, since then. Because of the recession in Britain, colleges have little problem attracting student teachers. Because of cutbacks in education funding, schools, which now manage their own budgets, have been forced to increase class sizes and reduce the level of staffing in schools. This has reduced the vacancy rate. Teachers also appear more reluctant to leave the profession because of limited employment opportunies elsewhere.

It is difficult, even when teachers belong to teacher unions, for them to know what is happening in other parts of the educational system, or indeed, within their own schools. Few teachers have the opportunity to observe their colleagues at work, although formal teacher evaluation has been introduced in Britain since this study was undertaken.

Teacher isolation can lead to a dispirited and demoralized profession. "Thus, while autonomous teachers have the luxury of working alone, it is precisely because they work alone that no one seems to know exactly what they do or accomplish. As a consequence, teachers feel isolated and unappreciated" (Anderson, 1987, p.361). Sarason (1982) wrote that the "teacher is alone with problems and dilemmas, constantly thrown back on personal resources, having little interpersonal vehicles available for personal stimulation, change or control" (p.162). This is an important observation in the context of the present study because many of the teachers administering the SAT's were the only teachers engaged in that activity in their school. Infants' schools in Britain tend to be small and self-contained. Apart from the occasional training day, there was little opportunity for Key Stage 1 teachers to interact with their colleagues and share experiences.

Another factor which has particular relevance to this study is the element of competitiveness that mandated testing introduces into schools both between students and between teachers. Although tests are supposed to measure student performance it is an extremely unusual school that doesn't measure teacher performance as well. Most teachers, in any case, take some measure of pride in the success of their students, even when the tests they are administering go against their own teaching philosophy.

The teachers in Freedman, Jackson and Boles' (1983) Boston study were not encouraged to share teaching experiences chiefly because of the spirit of individualism and competitiveness that pervaded their schools.

> We never had any administrative encouragement to work together. There was never any time, there was never any made, there were very few groups decisions. It's a very individual thing, if you found someone you wanted to share materials with, you did it on your own. No, nobody has ever encouraged that route . . . It only comes from the individual teachers in our building. None of it is encouraged by the principal (D, 1979, p. 69)

In circumstances of tight control and supervision brought about through centralized curricula and testing some of the women in this study found that they felt isolated in the midst of a highly structured system.

> I don't think there are people who are really close. I can just not picture one teacher going to another one in tears. There's no one to run to. Not

> just for me. People really just don't get that close. And I think part of it is working in in an impersonal system. You do what the boss tells you. You don't have choices. You file at 10.10, whether you like it or not . . . Everything is impersonally handled - time, bells (A, 1979).

These comments are pertinent to this study. The negative feelings experienced by these teachers were, they believed, brought about not so much by the fact that people didn't care what teachers did but because they cared too much. Even when the classroom door was wide open to scrutiny there was always the suspicion that others were doing a better job. Instead of sharing successes and failures, teachers were measured by them.

At the other end of the measuring scale is the complete absence of supervision. However, whilst this might sound appealing to the teacher panting to close the classroom door against administrative intrusion, complete autonomy can actually impede innovation. Joyce and Clift (1984) pointed out that beginning teachers working alone will tend to adapt to their new school environment in the safest way possible and this usually means by teaching in a traditional way. The freedom that a new teacher might be given to experiment is lost if there is no team-work, mentoring system or support. Autonomy, for probationary teachers appears to represent the thin end of the wedge.

Disenchantment and Alienation

Teachers can also experience a sense of alienation from administration because of poor communication and a lack of consensus about goals and objectives. Lortie (1986) found, for instance, that "teachers . . . are more disenchanted with . . . the organizational context of teaching . . . than their disenchantment with core tasks in the classroom" (p.569). As the Reform Act gave explicit goals and objectives there was an opportunity for schools to become less alienating environments. However, the Boston Women's study (Freedman, Jackson & Boles, 1983) indicated that organizations have to overcome the competitive culture that seems to build up amongst teachers when testing is introduced. Although large parts of the National Curriculum have been adopted in primary schools, teacher assessment is still an isolated activity. Since results are available to administration and parents, teachers are likely to resent the organizational structures which force them to comply with testing strategies they have not devised themselves and which may not match their personal philosophy of teaching.

Resistance to Change

Teachers who have a high level of classroom autonomy have a tendency to support the status quo (Anderson, 1987). In their study of 34 Bay Area school districts Deal and Celotti (1977) found that without adequate feedback and monitoring, innovative programmes had short lives. Teachers were "free to experiment according to personal commitment - or whim - and then to let the initial momentum dwindle, soon to be replaced with another inspiration" (p.22). Parish and Arends (1983) showed how innovative programmes in five U.S. school districts they studied were discontinued by teachers "outside the formal decision-making structure of the school" (p.63). Teacher autonomy allows teachers not only to veto programmes but also consign them to history.

Dickson Corbett, Firestone, and Rossman (1987) have shown how change cannot take place in schools without teacher co-operation. Most research on change emphasizes the difficulties of implementing innovations and keeping them in place. Welch (1979) demonstrated how some curriculum innovations didn't even find their way into the classroom. Gross, Giaquinta, & Bernstein (1971) blamed policy that went astray on poor administrative planning and a heavy logistical burden on teachers. Huberman and Miles (1984) blamed lack of time to learn new techniques and poor monitoring in the latter stages of implementation. Hall (1984) blamed principals for poor leadership. However, Fullan (1982) pointed out that change depended on the cooperation of teachers and what they do and think. More recently research has centered on the importance of school climate and ethos and how this affects teachers' attitudes towards change. (Dickson Corbett, Firestone & Rossman, 1987).

Even when teachers' autonomy is severely restricted they are still able to resist change. Frymier (1987) studied the effects of 1970's court-ordered desegregation legislation in urban schools. Teachers struggled to resist what they considered to be the worst aspects of this policy even under threat. "Power struggles developed between those who wanted to save jobs (i.e. teachers) and those who wanted to save money (i.e., administrators and school board members)" (p.10). Broadfoot (1985a) also noted that teachers were not just "the passive agents of the institutional framework in which they work" (p. 264). Dale (1981) pointed out that the State could not guarantee delivery of its policies because teachers were relatively isolated. "Teachers are not merely 'state functionaries' but do have some degree of autonomy, and this autonomy will not necessarily be used to further the proclaimed ends of the state apparatus" (p. 13). Apple (1988) noted that the pursuit of organizational goals is only one piece of a teacher's agenda. "The mere fact that the state wishes to find 'more efficient' ways to organize teaching does not guarantee that this will be acted upon by teachers who have a long history of work practices and self-organization once the doors to their rooms are closed" (p.39).

Benefits Associated with Teacher Autonomy

Deal and Celotti (1977) have identified four benefits associated with teacher autonomy.

(1) Adaptation to change is simpler.

(2) Confidence in teachers' ability reduces the need to "police" activities and releases administrators for other activities.

(3) It saves planning time and reduces co-ordination costs, and

(4) It boosts confidence and morale and gives a sense of self-worth.

The opportunity to adapt to change and to react to the individual needs of students is the most problematic of these. Broadfoot (1985b) has shown that teachers are not always aware of the opportunities they have to adapt nor do they always use them. Furthermore, when adaptation is required it is more often legislated than left up to the authority of individual teachers. This is especially so in the case of curriculum content.

Teachers and the Control of Curriculum

Eller (1989), Apple (1989) and Giroux (1989) have observed, along with many other writers, how teachers have become managers rather than shapers of curriculum. The separation of conception from execution is one of the criticisms critical theorists have about the way teachers' work has been deskilled. Giroux (1988) observed that

> One of the major threats facing prospective and existing teachers within the public school is the increasing development of instrumental ideologies that emphasize a technocratic approach to both teacher preparation and classroom pedagogy. At the core of the current emphasis on instrumental and pragmatic factors in school life are a number of important pedagogical assumptions. These include: a call for the separation of conception from execution; the standardization of school knowledge in the interest of managing and controlling it; the devaluation of critical, intellectual work on the part of teachers and students for the primacy of practical considerations. (p. 123)

The attempt to undermine teacher authority inside the classroom leaves little room elsewhere for teachers to exercise their professional autonomy. Studies in Australia (Bourke,1984) and the U.S. (Deal and Celotti, 1977) have shown that teachers have little control over organizational activities outside the classroom. Leon, Nason, Omar, Bastos, and Blumberg (1982), undertook a cross-cultural study of teachers in Brazil, Jordan, the United States and Venezuela. They differentiated between classroom activities and organizational activities such as attending meetings, supervising playgrounds or lunch rooms, maintaining up to date student records and reporting to parents. They concluded that "in each country teachers felt more autonomous relative to classroom activities and less autonomous relative to organizational activities" (p. 10-11).

Farrand's more recent (1988) Mexican study showed how teachers experienced some sense of freedom but felt constrained by administrative expectations. "they tend to comply with the perceived wishes of the education authorities, controlling pupils and concentrating on the informative aspects of the curriculum" (p. 122). Farrand also noted, however, that rural teachers and those working in low socio-economic status schools were more likely to adapt curriculum to the needs of their children than teachers in the cities and in higher socio-economic schools. This raises the question of teacher accountability.

Teachers are not only accountable to administrators, but they also have a responsibility towards the children they teach, their parents and the community. The way in which teachers mediate these multiple obligations has recently been the focus of some valuable research by Broadfoot (1985a, 1985b, 1987).

Accountability and Obligations of Teachers

Broadfoot and her co-researchers in Bristol have been particularly interested in comparing the French and British systems of education because of their historically different forms of control. Until recently the French system has been highly centralized with a state curriculum and national testing. The British system has been highly decentralized and prior to the 1988 Education Reform Act there had been no central curriculum or national testing. Broadfoot (1987) observed that the differences between the two systems was decreasing due to shifts in educational policy in both countries.

> The increasing similarity at the present time between the two systems reflects the fact that each is tending to institute the aspect hitherto lacking to ensure effective control - in England moves towards the identification of National Curriculum goals; in France the provision of assessment as well as curricular norms in the form of a continuous, teacher based, pupil orientation procedure. (p. 275)

Broadfoot (1985a, 1985b) and Broadfoot, Osborne, Gilly and Paillet (1987) have attempted to identify those aspects of teachers' work which remain similar and those which vary when different types of government control are in place. Citing Minot (1979) 'autonomy is first and foremost a state of mind", Broadfoot has explored the ways in which teachers in Britain and France react to the kinds of control they experience. Minot (1979) pointed out that in the highly centralized French system there are structural paradoxes which prevent the reality of centralized control ever being totally successful.

> The explanation for this paradox lies principally in the difficulty of making formal central control a reality in practice, whilst at the same time the assumption that it exists precludes the evolution of other, potentially more effective sources of control within the institution itself (p. 37).

Minot went on to explain that as teachers felt accountable only for delivery of curriculum and to the government inspectors who policed it, the fact that they rarely appeared meant that there was very little real control. Even parental and student expectations had little effect on teachers' attitudes towards their work.

Broadfoot, (1985a) citing Becher, et al.(1981) noted that accountability is usually defined in three ways: Professional accountability to colleagues, moral accountability to clients, and bureaucratic accountability to the administrative hierarchy. Where there is a disparity among these different areas of accountability there is likely to be "considerable tension and unrest within the educational system and clear testimony to the lack of consensus over educational goals " (Broadfoot, 1985a). Broadfoot, Gilly, Osborne and Paillet (1987) have further classified the notion of responsibility according to types of control within educational systems. They can be summarized as follows:

1. Collectivism v. individualism.
   French teachers' primary goal is curricular. British teachers have a strong child-centred ideology.

2. Universalism v. particularism.
   In France pedagogic style is fairly uniform. In England there is much greater variety because of the emphasis on children as individuals.

3. Role permeability v role impermeability.
   Teachers in France have a clearly defined professional role. British teachers experience much greater contradiction because of competing educational philosophies and the range of interest groups in society as a whole.

4. Narrow v broad definition of responsibility.
   French teachers are hired to transmit knowledge. British teachers are expected to provide a whole range of skills - social, personal, academic, etc.

5. Isolationism v co-operation.
   Co-operation is a much more characteristic feature of British schools than French schools due to the detached attitude French teachers have towards their work.

6. Overt v covert evaluation

   French schools emphasize formal testing far more than British schools.

The extent to which teachers in England deal with multiple goals and multiple stake-holders is a particularly interesting aspect of this research. Broadfoot (1985b) pointed out that besides macro-organizational influences there are also three different sources of influence on personal decision making in the classroom. She identified these as socio-psychological characteristics of the teaching situation itself such as strong teacher authority, pupil coercion and group oriented curricula. These could be found almost universally and are international constants. The second is the way that teachers are perceived professionally and these vary from country to country. The third is the way that teaching reflects teachers' own convictions and experiences. These are essentially idiosyncratic and unpredictable. Broadfoot (1985b) found that both French and British teachers experienced considerable freedom to choose their own pedagogical style and curriculum strategy regardless of whether they were working in a centralized or decentralized system. Her findings can be summarised as follows:

1. French teachers are less constrained by community pressures and internal control. They experienced little interference because of universally accepted curricular goals.

2 Attempts to decentralize the French system may have the effect of creating more control not less.

3. With the French centralized system teachers have considerable pedagogic freedom but they seldom exercise it. There is little encouragement to experiment and minimal in-service training team teaching, group work or project work.

4. Constraints on British teachers under a decentralized system are often paradoxically tight because of localized accountability e.g. head teacher, governors, colleagues and parents.

5. Because British teachers have a strongly held tradition of professional autonomy there is typically a greater diversity from school to school.

Broadfoot noted that French teachers were actually relatively free institutionally to identify their own teaching strategies but were constrained by an ideological tradition of commitment to central control and that British teachers, by contrast, were relatively free ideologically but constrained institutionally. This shows how difficult it is to draw any valid generalizations between the national context, classroom practice and the scope for instituting more radical pedagogies in different countries. (p. 267)

These studies by Broadfoot are useful in trying to predict the likely outcome of educational reform in Britain. One way in which 1988 Education Act reforms were likely to be very different from the centralized control in place in France was in the localized responsibility for implementation. Responsibility for ensuring that curriculum targets are being achieved rested initially with the Head Teacher and, through a network of advisors, the Local Authority. The British reforms have kept in place the weakness of the French system namely localized accountability. However, because assessments were also sent to the NCER, SEAC's assessment agency, teachers were also monitored by central government agencies. British teachers, therefore, were accountable both locally and to central government.

Mediating between Obligations

Hawthorne (1987) believed that teachers translated policy into practice by arbitrating, not always consciously, between obligations.

> A number of obligations mediate the translation of curriculum potential to what happens in classrooms - obligations to the teaching professions, to the organization within which teachers work, and to the clients (both students and parents) they serve. These multiple obligations provide the key to teacher choice (Shulman, 1983). Faced with competing and, at times, conflicting obligations, upon instructional programs, teachers pick and choose, depending upon circumstances. Teachers' responses, not always conscious, translate policy into practice and integrate into the classroom curriculum their obligations to profession, organization and client. (p.34)

In Farrand's (1988) Mexican study some teachers felt a greater responsibility towards their pupils from poor backgrounds than to government curriculum directives that made no sense to them. Farrand's study was intended to explore three areas of accountability:

1) formal responsibility, including the sources of regulatory authority and control, that teachers recognize in their practice and for what and to whom they identify formal accountability.
2) informal accountability and the extent to which teachers feel themselves to be influenced by and under obligation to fulfil the expectations of other interested parties such as pupils and parents.
3) personal responsibility and autonomy: how much freedom to make decisions teachers' experience, and the perceived significance of this margin of manoeuvre on their practice. (p.105)

Broadfoot (1985b) found that teachers sometimes failed to respond to the changing learning needs of pupils. They responded instead to administrative pressures, or passively accepted traditional goals and techniques. Teachers, she believed, needed to become more aware of their "margin of manoeuvre". One teacher who has written about this margin of manoeuvre is Fowler (1988). Writing about his work as a mathematics teacher Fowler noted that he could make choices about (a) the way the class is operating (b) what happens in the lesson (c) what direction is taken and (d) how the students behave. He described four facets of his role in the classroom. Controller, counsellor, advisor and teacher. These, he believed, gave him a sense of freedom and a sense of professionalism.

It seems possible, therefore, to separate two aspects of teacher autonomy; control of curriculum content and control over teaching strategies. Whilst Fowler believed he had some control of content through selection of types of curriculum, his chief concern was his control over strategy. This appears to be where most 'margin of manoeuvre' lies.

Some writers believe that teachers should not be allowed to control curriculum content. Schwille et al. (1983) have argued that while teacher control over strategy is desirable, control of content is not if the education system is to have some kind of consistency. However, the weakness of this argument lies in the fact that the way content is taught can be considerably more important than the content itself.

Anderson (1985) claimed, for instance, that "the standardization problem arises not when the goals are prescribed, but when the operations [strategies] are prescribed" (p.369). Doyle (1979) pointed out that teacher tasks are usually defined as goals to be accomplished and operations leading to the accomplishment of these goals. There is some consensus amongst writers over the desirability of teachers taking responsibility for tasks such as planning instruction, assessing students, clarifying behavioral rules and routines, and maintaining student involvement in learning. There is much less consensus over the control teachers should have on strategy because it seems that strategy can sometimes define goals.

Kinds of Control

Ryan (1983) suggested that teachers needed more autonomy in deciding how to reach a goal when the link between the goal and the strategy is unclear or unpredictable and less autonomy when the link between the goal and the strategy is unproblematic. Ryan also suggested that administrators could be more evaluative of the latter strategies than the former and should be less directive and more supportive when goals are unpredictable. Raelin (1989) has defined three further kinds of administrative autonomy. *Strategic autonomy* enables school boards, superintendents and central office staff to select broad goals and policies according to the obligations and accountability they have to the community. *Administrative autonomy* is exercised by the principal and staff who have a responsibility to put plans into action according to the needs of parents and students. *Operational autonomy* includes freedom by teachers to achieve goals according to their own abilities and psychological attributes and within organizational resources and strategic constraints. The kinds of control Raelin saw teachers administering included choice of textbooks, curricular planning, class size, testing and evaluation and scheduling. These he saw as part of professional development and opportunities to participate in these kind of decisions should be available in schools. These kind of opportunities do not seem to be readily available to many British teachers (Times Educational Supplement, 12.10.90).

Responsible Autonomy

Teacher autonomy is declining under systems of standardized curriculum and testing, but the effect this has on teachers can vary considerably. Shulman (1983) in trying to mediate between the needs of society and the needs of teachers as professionals asked the following question:

> If the responsible and effective teacher must be both free and obligated, how shall we define the proper mix of those typically incompatible virtues? Do we risk tyranny from above to achieve needed order and equity? Or do we foster liberty and autonomy while thereby risking anarchy and chaos? (p. 162)

Shulman believed that a way had to be found to foster both responsibility and freedom in the teacher. Critical theorists would agree. If teachers wish to foster the kind of education system that liberates the mind of the child and that of the teacher there has to be the freedom in schools for that to happen. Unfortunately, however, freedom alone does not necessarily foster and promote emancipatory knowledge. Behind the closed doors of a classroom teachers can be autonomously autocratic, autonomously indoctrinaire, autonomously miserable, autonomously inspiring or autonomously truly liberating. It is unlikely that an attitude can be legislated or that professional autonomy alone can bring about radical change.

So in trying to establish a form of professional autonomy that promotes emancipatory education it is not so much a question of how much autonomy teachers have but what they do with it that counts. Eller (1989) commenting on Maeroff's (1989) book about teacher empowerment and his failure to address the origins of disempowerment and its social, political and historical context wrote

> giving teachers more autonomy without simultaneously addressing their role as educators will ultimately fail. My own research with teachers in Eastern Kentucky illustrates that genuine empowerment does not ensue merely from the implementation of particular managerial strategies which are designed to give teachers more control of their jobs (although these can certainly facilitate empowerment). Rather empowerment is grounded in teachers' understanding and acceptance of the significance of their role as educators. . . . I would argue that "empowerment", as it is defined by Maeroff is actually a misnomer. While structural change can enhance empowerment, genuine empowerment is rooted in ideological reform. (p. 374)

The nature of the knowledge teachers impart and the way they do it are important. When teaching is controlled to such an extent that the kind of knowledge included in the curriculum and the way it is taught are policed, then some teachers will experience a sense of powerlessness. However, there is already evidence that teachers have a resilience and will to dictate a great deal of what happens in their working lives despite legislative intrusion into their classrooms. This resilience seems strongest when it is grounded in strongly held philosophical beliefs about the nature of teaching and schooling.

School Organization and the Decline in Teacher Autonomy

Central governments have the power to influence the way teachers teach. However, there are other facets of school administration that also affect teacher autonomy. Anderson (1987) identified three aspects of school organization that have contributed to the decline in teacher autonomy which are not directly related to government intervention: the influence of trade unions, the effective teacher movement and the concept of principal as instructional leader.

The extent to which trade unionism has influenced teaching conditions is unclear. Kerchner (1986) claimed that teacher trade unions had contributed to the closer supervision of teachers through negotiating contracts that specified detailed conditions of work. These served to protect members from what unions saw as impingements upon teacher rights and freedoms.

In England, where there is a recent history of militant industrial action, contract negotiations have been complicated by the historical rivalry among teacher unions. Different unions have represented different interest groups within the teaching profession. This long festering rivalry was dealt a sudden and dramatic blow in 1988 when the British government abolished the Burnham Committee, the teachers' negotiating machinery. At the time of this study there had been no formal negotiations over teacher contracts and teacher unions had been reduced to publishing policy statements and lobbying Ministers in order to influence teachers' working conditions. In 1991, British teacher contracts specified in great detail teachers' conditions of service, but this was not the result of union lobbying. The teachers' contract was imposed by the Government through Statute. Parts of this contract such as the number of hours teachers must work in a year, were often ignored especially by teachers who found they had to work far more hours than were specified in order to keep abreast of their work. The teacher contracts in Britain were viewed with considerable cynicism by practising teachers mainly because of the way they were introduced. Teacher unions likewise viewed with cynicism government attempts to legislate teachers' working conditions because they were based on what they believed were fictional understandings of teachers' working lives.

Anderson's (1987) claim that the teacher effectiveness movement, teacher evaluation and instructional leadership have led to a decline in teacher autonomy in the United States is easier to uphold. Anderson pointed out that prior to the 1970's there was very little research undertaken inside classrooms. Goodlad, Klein and Associates' (1974) book *Looking Behind The Classroom Door* "attests to the sanctity of the classrooms they entered as the researchers conducted their studies" (p.364). Since the 1970's there have been many attempts to "improve" teaching. Davis and Odden (1986) and Soar, Medley and Coker (1983) have examined the effect of state improvement programmes. Soar, Medley and Coker (1983) showed how teacher autonomy had given away to concerns for "best teaching practice". "Best teaching practice" led to teacher evaluation.

The introduction of teacher appraisal has had a checkered history in Britain. Before Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher resigned the then Secretary of State for Education John McGregor decided not to introduce teacher assessment, chiefly because of the expense and time it would take. However, John Major reversed that decision. Teachers will be evaluated in Britain bienially commencing in 1993.

Rutherford (1985) believed that the "death knell of individual teacher autonomy was sounded by the advocacy of principals as instructional leaders" (p.365) Citing the work of Hallinger and Murphy (1986) Anderson (1987) described the features of instructional leadership that lead to a reduction of teacher autonomy: (1) development of school missions - shared purpose, (2) interaction amongst teachers to pursue this mission, and (3) applying consistency in policies and practices among classrooms.

Freedman, Jackson and Boles (1983), however, have identified a number of contradictions in recent educational reform. Whilst public rhetoric demands a democratic educational environment it also demands a closer correspondence with the needs of the economy. These conflicting goals can create a turbulent environment for teachers. Freedman, Jackson and Boles (1983) list four areas of conflict.

> 1. Teachers work in an institution which supposedly prepares its clients for adulthood, but which views those entrusted with this task, the teacher themselves, as incapable of mature judgement.
>
> 2. The schools have the responsibility of developing the whole child. But the structure of the institution constricts the types of behavior acceptable in teachers and students.
>
> 3. Education is charged with the social task of providing equal opportunity for the school-age population of a pluralist, multi-level society. But the structure of schools emphasizes comparative worth and increases competition not only among the pupils but also among parents, teachers, and administrators.
>
> 4. Public education is charged with upholding democracy by developing an electorate capable of critical thinking and the intelligent balancing of alternatives, but teachers are required to pursue this goal by increasingly mechanical, technical means. (p.62)

One of the teachers Eller (1989) interviewed put the point succinctly. "They want us to teach kids to think . . . but not think too much" (p. 374).

The Effects of Testing on Teachers' Working Lives

The reforms that have most affected teachers' lives in the United States during the 1980's have been the introduction of a centralized curriculum, standardized testing and teacher evaluation. A number of authors have commented on the effect these changes have had on teachers' lives. In their study of a teacher incentive program in Wisconsin, Popkewitz and Lind (1989) noted, like Freedman, Jackson and Boles (1983) the discrepancy between reform rhetoric and the realization of school reform. In the Wisconsin program, efforts were made to "improve"' the quality of teaching through standardization. "Good" teacher evaluations would reap financial rewards and promotions and, as a result, teachers would become more "professional" and thus more satisfied with their working lives. Popkewitz and Lind (1989) observed some important assumptions behind these "quality" reforms.

1. Teachers would increase the amount of work they were doing.
2. Increased monitoring would illuminate and improve teachers' competence,
3. Monitoring would be objective so as to eliminate judgments and biases and
4. The increased work and monitoring would be systematically reorganized to provide a new hierarchy for allocation of financial reward. (p. 581)

The result of the Wisconsin program was not what the organizers of the program planned. Teachers found they were constantly busy. They appear to have undergone both deskilling and intensification. "Teachers were to look busy but were not judged according to their productivity; the appearance of productivity was the criterion of competence" (Popkewitz & Lind, 1989, p. 578). Teachers became increasingly conservative in their teaching styles at the same time as they experienced conflict over what was happening to them.

> Teaching became the efficient ordering and standardization of knowledge and people. While teachers viewed the standardization with uneasiness, their efforts to find alternatives often were channelled in ways that reinforced underlying orientations towards control and order. (p. 570)

The teachers in this program became increasingly dissatisfied with their work. Although they valued much of the autonomy given them in mastering these new tasks, many questioned the values surrounding what they were being asked to do. Teachers thought that they were doing more to justify and support the work they had always done. They were also concerned about the meager amounts of money associated with the incentives, and the routine time-consuming tasks they required. Some teachers raised questions about the social meaning of the work required of them. A concern was expressed that the incentives program challenged communal values among teachers that stressed equal working conditions. (p. 584)

Popkewitz and Lind (1989) showed how, with the introduction of a "common language", the acceptance of increased monitoring and work intensification, came to be seen by teachers as professionalism. But the effect of this new style of professionalism was to place a straight jacket on teachers' creativity. The language that teachers saw as enabling them to justify and intellectually guide their own work simultaneously created a poverty of expression of their knowledge. As one examines the common language, its unidimentionality becomes apparent; its priorities involve transforming teachers' work into actions than can be defined in explicit, hierarchical, linear, and sequential ways. The importance of aesthetics, the playfulness of experience, and the use of intuition are lost. (p. 590).

This is an important study in the context of the Key Stage 1 Assessment. Teachers have had to acquire a great deal of new terminology and this acquisition of new language and new skills may give some what they perceive as a heightened sense of professionalism. One teacher in the Popkewitz and Lind (1989) study, for example, drew an analogy between her teaching life and medicine:

> I view it as similar to a doctor. Doctors examine a patient, make a diagnosis, prescribe a remedy. They have a body of knowledge and/or common language to translate that knowledge to themselves and others. As teachers, we can now examine the classroom setting, make a diagnosis, and prescribe a remedy. We have a body of knowledge and a common language in which to communicate. (p. 590)

However, Wise and Darling Hammond's (1983) study of teachers' reactions to testing found that the five most cited effects were

1) altered curriculum emphasis
2) teaching students *how* to take the test
3) teaching students *for* the test
4) having less time to teach, and
5) feeling under pressure.

Wise and Darling Hammond (1983) were critical of the school authorities' perception of the relationship between testing and results. "The more they attempt to specify in detail what are desirable learnings or teachings, the more likely they are to miss the mark and even cause damage to some of the professed beneficiaries" (p. 39).

Green (1983) commented on the inability of public policy makers to construct harmless solutions.

> Public policy is a crude instrument for securing social ideals. We would not use a drop-forge to quarter a pound of butter or an axe to perform heart surgery. Public policy is the drop-forge or the axe of social change. It is not the knife or the scalpel. That is to say, public policy deals with gross values. It deals with the common good. . . the tools of policy are limited in another way. They are best construed as aimed not at the advancement of specific benefits, but at the prevent of specific evils. Injustice is always present to our conscience with more definiteness than justice. Injustices are nearly always specific. Justices seldom are. It is true that government can't do everything we desire, and therefore, it is equally true that public policy is not the right instrument to secure all our desires . . . Minimizing evil is a proper aim of public policy. Maximating good is probably not. The latter assumes that we may shape the axe into a scalpel. (p. 146)

Wise and Darling Hammond (1983), Popkewitz and Lind (1989), Freedman, Jackson and Boles (1983) and Eller (1988) have shown through their studies of teachers' working lives that standardized curriculum and testing can affect both the nature of knowledge taught in the classroom and the attitudes teachers have towards their work and each other.

Apple (1986) observed that "one of the most significant weaknesses of left analysis has been the lack of a concrete proposal for policy and practice in education that would build on democratic elements that now exist in schools and replace those things that are clearly wrong" (p.107). Bastian et al, (1986) believed, however, that it was possible for the effective school movement which was the driving force behind state testing and evaluation to be transformed into something that "would center on greater community efficacy, more interesting and socially-grounded curricula, teaching and evaluative strategies, and a higher degree of involvement of all concerned" (p. 107).

> Schools do not have to mirror economic imperatives; they can also respond to social imperatives. If education were constructed around the social needs of children, families, communities, and a democratic society, the priority would endow all children with the basic and higher order skills needed to fulfill personal and citizenship roles. The mission of schooling would be individual and social empowerment, which itself would promote a more equitable chance of survival in the labor market. We believe schools can make a difference in our quality of life, but realizing this potential will require different schools. (p. 163)

The Effects of Testing in Britain

Broadfoot (1990) has reported the results of 150 interviews with infants' teachers during the spring and summer of 1990 when the SAT's were being piloted.

> Teachers' own feelings about changes in assessment and record-keeping were similar to the observations of HMI although the latter convey nothing

> of the anxiety, frustration, exhaustion, determination to protect children's interest and other strongly felt emotions that emerged in many of the interviews and is as important to take into account as their actual content. In summary the picture which emerges is much what might have been expected. A much greater emphasis on assessment and record-keeping; some considerable resentment at the time demands and the perceived unnecessary formalization of much of it; fears about the potential impact of such pervasive assessment and recording on the teaching-learning process, relationships with parents and the pupils themselves. (Broadfoot, Osborn, Abbott, Croll and Pollard, 1990)

There were early indications, therefore, that the effect of testing in Britain mirrors the research findings of Wise and Darling Hammond (1983).

A number of other writers in Britain have commented on the introduction of the Reform Act and its likely effect on teachers, schools and children. Lawton (1989), whilst not opposed to the concept of a National Curriculum, pointed out that its current prescriptivity precluded teachers from engaging in curriculum formulation and development. Teachers, he said "appear to be regarded as routine workers transmitting central syllabuses rather than sharing "ownership" of the curriculum. (p. 30). He commented that the National Curriculum as currently conceived was constructed without any reference to important educational developments over the last 40 years. "We have learned to be very suspicious of the behavioral objectives, training model of curriculum planning which deprofessionalizes the teachers and trivializes the educational process" (p.31). Lawton also attacked the way that the curriculum had been built around knowledge compartments which have the effect of decontextualizing them.

Armstrong (1987) has also written pessimistically about the effect of the Act on curriculum. He believed that the effect of an assessment-led curriculum would be "to stifle innovation, to inhibit the free play of ideas and to extinguish any lingering sense of excitement, originality and adventure about the business of teaching and learning (Times Educational Supplement, May 15, 1990). Gipps (1988) believed that the teacher would have a different relationship with his or her pupils - "not so much that of guide and mentor, but more one based on instruction and assessment" (p.73). Gipps is ambivalent about whether this would lead to more or less satisfaction amongst classroom teachers. Commenting on the work of Broadfoot et al (1987) Gipps pointed out that French teachers who had clear objectives because of a centralized curriculum were more easily able to measure their success at teaching than British teachers with much vaguer goals. "It may be that in the 1990's when primary teachers have got used to the idea of the national curriculum, regular exams and assessments, and to being technicians delivering an unproblematic and fixed curriculum that they will get satisfaction from achieving their objectives, that is, getting an acceptable number of children to pass their exams. You never can tell" (p. 75).

Summary

The effects of testing on teachers and their children are wide ranging and complex. In this chapter I have attempted to summarize the areas of research of most interest in this study.

The research on policy implementation is of particular significance because the work I undertook placed a major Government policy initiative under the spotlight. I was interested in knowing whether this study could confirm or reject the claims made by writers examined in this literature review. How did the formulators of this policy and the implementors in the classroom and in the Local Authority offices deal with policy directives? How was the policy enforced? Were there sufficient resources? What was the environment in which this policy was implemented? What were the attitudes of teachers towards an ever increasing encroachment on their professional territory? How much paper work and bureaucracy were involved? How complex was the policy and what methods were used to communicate the requirements of the policy? These, and other issues, were raised in the literature review. This study provides an opportunity to add to the body of literature on policy implementation.

The review of literature related to professionalism and teacher autonomy is also relevant. The testing policy in Britain both affected teachers' relationship with their professional unions, their relationship with Government aand their relationship with the children they taught. It also affected their personal lives. How did teachers in this study view their role as a teacher? Did they see themselves as professionals, like the teacher in the Popkewitz and Lind (1989) study who drew an analogy between herself and a doctor, or did they view themselves as part of a depersonalized testing machine like some of the teachers in the Boston Women's Study. How did teachers view professionalism in the light of union directives to disobey legislative requirements if the work load became too onerous?

The review of literature on the nature of teachers' work is related to issues such as professionalism and autonomy. To what extent can this study support or reject the claims that imposed testing fragments curriculum and deskills teachers? What evidence is there that teachers suffer from intensification? Do teachers become so overworked that they are unable to reflect upon what is happening to them? Does the "getting done" become more important then "what is done"?

Broadfoot's work on accountability and obligation is included in this study because of the radical nature of the policy under review. Clearly, teachers involved in the implementation of a testing policy are obliged to make choices. Do they place legislative requirements before professional discretion? How much does concern for the welfare of children supercede concern for local bureaucracy? How do teachers mediate between what appear to be conflicting and contradictory obligations? How do teachers react to being told what, when and how to teach when they disagree with those directives? How do teachers cope with additional demands on their time? How much margin of manouvre did teachers find during the implementation of the testing policy?

Finally, to what extent did teaching and learning change during the process of implementation? What did teachers feel about the National Curriculum? Was supervised curriculum based testing an acceptable alternative to unsupervised teacher based assessment? Did teachers change the way they taught, and if so, how did they change? How did children react to the continuous assessment and testing process? Did teachers feel that standards were raised? Did parents understand more about their children's progress? What effect did the publication of results have on the education environment? How did teacher union's react to the pressures placed on their teachers? What were the political ramifications of this policy? All these questions will be examined in the subsequent chapter. They will be answered through the voices of teachers struggling to implement the Government's testing policy in 1991.

Chapter 4

Teachers' Conversations
January and February, 1991

1991 was the year that the government's plan to test the nation's children was to be put into action. The first cohort selected was the top infants (6-7 year olds) group. It was a year in which a major educational policy implementation was to have a dramatic effect on the lives of all of those involved. My aim is to relate how the year unfolded through the conversations I had with teachers involved in the policy implementation and to try and answer the questions posed in the previous chapter.

In this and the following chapter I report the findings of these conversations. Because of the importance of the voices of the participants and to highlight how issues grew over the course of six months between preparation for and acutal implementation of the tests I have chosen to report the data in in two sequences: January/February, 1991 and June/July, 1991. This chapter covers the period January/February, 1991 when teachers were undertaking assessments. Within this chapter three reporting formats are used: the conversation with Susan is presented almost in its entirety to provide a grounding for susbsequent issues and to illustrate emancipatory conversation. Then the themes raised in the conversations are discussed. Finally the issues of professionalism, government intentions, control and self-esteem are identified.

Initial Contacts

The British government's plans for testing were well under way when I went to England in December, 1990. A much publicised trial program had taken place that year and many people involved in primary education had expressed either interest or concern at this new development. Yet when I set out to find teachers prepared to take part in my study, I found it difficult to gain access to classrooms through formal channels. None of the authorities I contacted were willing to grant permission for me to meet with their teachers. Phone calls and visits resulted in evasion, suspicion and delay. This did not surprise me. My contacts were usually primary advisors, and sometimes more senior administrators. They were concerned that their teachers were already overburdened with implementing the National Curriculum, preparing for the testing ahead or already part of a research process set up by their own authority. Another stranger entering the already stress-ridden classroom of the Key Stage 1 teacher seemed an unwelcome intrusion.

While I knew that it would be a problem gaining access to schools I was also was no stranger to the British school system. I had been working in England since April of 1989, and before that in Northern Ireland. Furthermore, I had a number of friends who were teachers in England or who had friends who were teachers. If this had not been the case, I doubt that this project would ever have taken place.

The main task during my first data gathering trip was to identify teachers who would be willing to participate in this study. I spent a great deal of the time on the telephone, contacting friends and speaking to potential participants. I also travelled up to Birmingham to the headquarters of the National Association of Schoolmasters, Union of Women Teachers (NAS/UWT). At the time I was still a member of this union as I was on leave from my teaching post in Haringey, London. Furthermore, I knew all the senior administrators, including the General Secretary, through my active involvement in the Union during my time in Northern Ireland. My contacts within the union proved invaluable. I was able to insert an advertisement in their newspaper asking for teachers interested in becoming part of my project to contact me via the NAS/UWT office. Three of the teachers I subsequently worked with were contacted through this source.

During January and February, I was able to tape conversations with four teachers and take notes at another. I also talked informally to a number of other teachers and administrators. Of the four teachers who permitted me to tape their conversations, one worked with a friend of mine with whom I had taught in the 60's in Alberta. Another was a neighbour of a friend of mine with whom I had once shared an apartment in Alberta and the third was someone I had met and become friends with when we travelled together in Albania. I was also able to visit two of the schools I had been teaching in myself back in 1989 and again in 1990. I also spoke with another teacher whom I had met in 1989/90. At that time she was on a Commonwealth Exchange Program and I came in contact with her because I had worked with her exchange teacher in Canada in the 1960's. I met another teacher who agreed to join the study on a sailing holiday in Greece. She, in turn, asked the person she worked with to participate.

I am taking some time to explain how I came to work with the teachers in this study in order to demonstrate the opportunistic selection that took place. At the same time, I wanted to make sure that there was a level of trust right at the outset between myself and the people with whom I came to work. I knew that the kind of conversations I wanted to have with the teachers in this study could prove stressful. I needed some assurance that the teachers I worked with were both keen to take part, and understood the nature of the work we were going to undertake. I had to be certain in my own mind that these teachers sensed there was something wrong with what was happening in their classrooms and had an interest in coming to understand their discomfort.

I was away in Britain on that first trip for five weeks. The weather was bad and at times made travelling hazardous. At one time when I was in Wales my car engine froze and I failed to make an appointment on time. This was one of the reasons why one planned taped interview with Marydid not take place. However, we still managed to talk in her classroom and this allowed me to take notes. I also watched her teach. I was able to arrange taped conversations with four teachers in Birmingham, Wrexham and Witney. I intended to use these conversations to identify the issues that were emerging from the assessment process. SATs were not being administered until after Easter, which in 1991 fell on the weekend of March 29 - April 1. Teachers in England usually have two weeks holiday around Easter and most returned to work on Monday, April 15th.

Although I did not really wish to limit the length of the conversations, I was aware that there had to be some constraints in the interests of data manageability. I decided to use 90 minute tapes. This way the teachers and myself would have a finishing point. As it turned out, all the teachers continued to speak with me well after the tapes were exhausted. In Susan's case, I was staying with her as well, so we had plenty of opportunity to talk about what was happening in her classroom outside of time allocated for the 'formal' conversation. The same phenomenon was to repeat itself when I set out to speak to all the teachers in the study in June of 1990. Even when the tape recorder was switched off the conversations would continue.

In Conversation with Susan

The conversation I had with Susan in January proved to be invaluable. Over a period of about two hours, Susan identified almost every issue that was to arise during the year. Because of this I have decided to include our conversation more or less in its entirety.

When the academics, politicians, administrators and teachers sat down to devise the tests and assessments for Key Stage 1 they could hardly have had Susan's school in mind. Few of Susan's children spoke English at home. Their families were mostly poor. They lived in a culture within a culture. Susan's concerns were not the policy makers concerns. She measured success relatively. Her's is a story of triumph over potential disaster. The tragedy is that Susan gave up. She retired at the end of 1991.

Through Susan's vivid description of her working life in a midland town, we come to understand the daily struggles to succeed, both by teachers and their students.

I just wish everyone would get off my back!

Susan was a friend of mine whom I had met on a trip to Albania. When I undertook this research project I decided to ask Susan to participate not just because she was a Key Stage 1 teacher, but she usually had interesting and thoughtful things to say about education. Susan's school was in one the poorest districts in England. Ninety five per cent of the population were from Pakistan or Bangladesh. Very few of the mothers spoke English at home. Susan spent a great deal of time describing the environment in which she taught. I visited the school because I wanted to place our conversation in a visual context. I also wanted to compare it with the schools I knew in London. Many of the teachers I spoke to in the North of England felt that they were impoverished compared with those in the South and this fueled their speculation that children in the South had more resources and were better prepared for the upcoming tests.

Susan's school looked out over row upon row of small, terraced houses long since abandoned by the white working class who had originally inhabited them. Sandwell is representative of many ghettoised industrial suburbs in the British midlands. I visited on a grey day, and an unpleasant pallor of polluted air appeared to hang over the playground and surrounding streets. It was a dismal scene.

Inside the school, though, I found little to distinguish it from many schools in other deprived areas of England where I had worked. In fact, it appeared to be better equipped than some of the schools in which I had taught in Haringey, London. This was a fair comparison to make, because Haringey is also a multi-racial borough and considered one of the poorest in the South of England. Susan's school was typical of many other ageing redbrick Victorian schools built the length and breadth of England. It had boys and girls entrances inscribed in stone on portals above the doors. And it had the usual small asphalt playground surrounded by high railings. Padlocks and chains hung around the sturdy school gates, both to keep intruders out and children in. Overall, though, Susan's school compared favourably with its counterparts in the South. That is not to say, though, that it compared favourably with other schools I visited later on in the study. Wendy's school in Hull, for example was new, open plan, and extremely well supplied with books and materials. There was really no comparison between the richness of Wendy's environment and the relative sparsity of Susan's. This was interesting for me, because Wendy's school was in a poor, working class, housing estate in Humberside.

Susan had been teaching in her current school for the past nine years. I asked her to talk about her life there. She explained that there hadn't been much change in the school during that time. The families in the area had always been poor because as soon as any family could afford to move they did. The area was predominantly Bengali. Quite often families would send their daughters back to Bangladesh to marry and then these women would return with their husbands to the area and move into one of the small terraced houses that surrounded the school.

I wanted to know whether Susan's teaching job had changed much during her nine years there. She explained that within the school she had taught all the age ranges from reception to middle and top infants, but the job itself had changed. The National Curriculum had made quite a difference.

> There's less freedom to go in and do what you would like to do. To plan you own work. Now you have to follow the National Curriculum guidelines. So it is very prescriptive. It leaves you less time to do things, you know, which you consider important. But you don't really have that much time for say, topic work or work about yourselves. Things of general interest. At the back of your mind you think, "Oh, I've got to keep these targets in mind and make sure I've covered this work and that work! So that has changed. Also the money has changed. There is very little new equipment. There's a lot of money spent on the National Curriculum documents - that sort of thing, but there's very little money for new equipment. The school is just kept ticking over. Repairs are done, you know, as they're needed, but there's no new work being carried out. I do think the head would like to make some changes there. You know, alterations. But there's just nothing!

I pursued the comment Susan made about constantly being aware of National Curriculum targets. What pressures did she feel? Who was watching her work and making sure she did this?

> I think everybody's watching everybody else. We've had schemes of work for English, maths and, well, RE. I don't know whether anybody ever followed it but it was there on paper. And those have obviously been altered and changed to come into line with the National Curriculum.

In what way was everybody watching everybody else? Was this a dramatic change?

> Oh yes! I think you went into your own class and you used to feel, this is your class. You could get on within reason and plan it as you wanted to and do what you liked. Now you cannot do that, really because you feel you've got to give a certain amount of time for science, you've got to give a certain amount of time to speaking and listening skills, you've got to give a certain amount of time to writing and with this thing, non-chronological writing. Now, I've never spent much time on that, but now I usually do one session a week on that which I didn't do before. I

really don't know that it's very useful but I do it now.

Susan gave me some examples of non-chronological writing such as maps and posters. I asked her to explain what would happen if she chose not to do some of these activities.

> Well, I think I would be a risk. Because we don't know what's going to be. What we're going to be given to test. What form it's going to take. But I feel that one of the things will be something from the non-chronological writing. I think it will be something like to design a poster for something. So, the children in my class, they wouldn't know what a poster meant, most of them. Certainly the Bengali children wouldn't. White children may. So I have to go through posters quite a few times so they will know what I'm talking about. We'll design a few so they'll be familiar with it and they can do it. Otherwise it would be very unfair for me to give them that test. They wouldn't know what I was talking about.

I felt that Susan was expressing some responsibility for the children. She was trying to give them as fair a chance as possible on the tests. She agreed. But I returned again to the question of who was checking up on Susan. Was she deciding that she had to do this, or was someone else making sure she did.

> No, we've discussed it and I think everybody sort of nearly panics. You know, they think, "Oh, we must do this and we must do that!" There's nobody giving a clear guideline of what we should be doing. There are two top classes. Myself and another teacher and we're sort of working out what we think we should be doing.

We talked about the publication of the test results. Susan believed that the first year of testing that she was involved in was going to be seen as a trial run. She didn't think the results had to be published but if parents asked to see them then they would be made available. I wanted to know about the Head Teacher and how she would feel about the results. Susan felt she would be very anxious to see them. However, she wasn't so sure about the Board of Governors. She mentioned that she had only ever seen one of them and she doubted that they would be interested in seeing them.

> But one thing I worry about. Teachers are giving the tests and we're supposed to group. The borough is divided into a number of sections and each group of schools will get together to sort of standardize their results so that we are all marking pretty well at the same level. But, having said that, the school I'm in. We seem to be grouped all the poor schools together which I think is really poor. I think we should be in a cross-section like a slice of a cake and have schools with higher standards.

It seemed that what Susan was concerned about was the amount of teacher judgement required for assessing the SAT's. How was Susan going to be trained to make sure her judgement was fair?

> Well, I haven't got a clue. I'm going on Thursday for a moderation meeting. Now what I find difficult is, how are we going to moderate something that we haven't seen. We haven't seen the tests! I have been told that we will have the tests before we break up for the Easter holidays, about a week before.

I wanted to know whether there had been any meetings to decide how the tests were going to be managed in the classrooms.

> No, we've just had informal discussions. We do not know what the tests are going to require. If the children are going to have to do practical work on their own. If the teacher is going to take them out individually to test them. The Head has said we will get some help in the classroom while they're going on. That's all we know.

Where would this help come from?

> Well, in our school we have got staff who are not class based. What we call EMS. Ethnic Minority Support teachers. They're there to help the children. They're funded by Section 11. And, I'm not sure, but I think we may have supply teachers in.

Susan did seem to know something about the attainment targets. She knew that most children were expected to come out at Level 2. But she also knew that some children were expected to come out at Level 3. Susan was doubtful that this would happen in her school.

> Having said that, the children who are at Level 3, if they are tested on every single attainment target, every profile component, they'll be about 230 things to test them on! The children who are not more than Level 2, there might be about 150. There are some very poor children. They might be 60 or 70 because you're not going to test a child on something that is far too advanced for them.

Susan had explained that she was already filling in profile forms. How was this working? How much time did it take?

> It's taking a lot of time! I have been given two afternoons off which helped, but it's taking a lot of time. I've done the records for the two core subjects. I haven't done the science yet. I just have no time!

I asked Susan to describe how she was organizing this extra work. When did she do this work?

> Over the weekend. In the evening you're too tired really. I find by the time you've got your National Curriculum documents out, your National Curriculum records out, you need to spread everything out, and then you need to sit down and go through it. It's not something you can pick up for ten minutes and put down. Perhaps in about five years time when you've been through this sort of thing a number of times you'll speed up.

How was Susan's teaching week structured now compared with before the introduction of the National Curriculum? Was she constantly aware of the weekend and the filling in of the forms?

> Well, I think everyone does their own thing. Now what I do is, I have a record book of my own which is a sort of a rough record book and I do, at the end of the week, tick off things which I've done. You put a dot if you've taught it to the children. They've done the work. You hatch it if they're ready to be tested and you colour it in if you have tested them and they know it. So if you did all those three things for every target . . .

Susan also had reservations about the validity of the assessment process.

> What I tend to do. At the end of the week, if I've covered something in

> science I tick it off all those children who are there so I know I can put a dot for all those children, anyway. That they've done it! Whether they know it or not is another matter! Because you find in science, you do a topic in October, say light and colour, something like that, or set up an electric circuit, make a toy with the light, something like that, and if you didn't do that again say, until the following May, they'll have forgotten how to do it. And yet you've shown that they know it!

What was Susan going to do about that?

> Well, this it! We'll have to wait and see what's on the, what will have to be tested. They're now saying that they're not going to test every attainment target in science and there is a suggestion that the first attainment target will carry 50% of the marks in which case the topics are less important.

I returned to the subject of how Susan's teaching life had changed. What was different?

> It was different as far as you weren't carrying this worry around on your shoulders all the time. You felt freer and more relaxed in class as far as you could do things you wanted to do like say, more art work, more creative work. You had the time for it. Now, you have very little time for that.

We talked about the scope of the National Curriculum and how Susan had adjusted her teaching to cope with it.

> I think the RE has gone by the board. Up until about a year ago I always did a little RE sessions every week, but that now is really not on. What I used to do was tell them an Old Testament story or just tell the children the meaning of Easter, the meaning of Christmas, the meaning of Ramadan - just talk generally about these things. There just isn't time for that anymore.

This was an interesting comment, especially as the Educational Reform Act had prescribed daily worship of a Christian character. How was the requirement of the Act being applied in Susan's school? Susan pointed out that since the 1944 Education Act RE was the one compulsory subject in schools.

> It was the one subject the teachers had to do - right? It was the one subject which most teachers didn't touch.
>
> R What was happening about daily worship, though? This was now a legal obligation of schools.
>
> S Well, yes. They go into the hall and they sing a song.
>
> R Was this every day?
>
> S Yes! Now Friday's birthdays. That's RE isn't it? We go in and we sing "How do you feel, one year older?" and "Happy Birthday to You". Then a badge and a birthday card and then the children who have been especially good that week have a little sticker and then they all have a clap. Now that's the Friday assembly.
>
> R Was there any religious content in the other daily 'worships'?
>
> S Very little. There might be a little song about, you know, pleasing God or thank you God for this or that. Little children's hymns.

I wanted to know how the school coped with the fact that at least 85% if not more of the children were non-Christian.

> What I think has happened is that we don't do anything. Obviously we have a little Christmas play and a Christmas party but I think that's mostly about presents, and decorations and that sort of thing, with a mention of the nativity. At Devani we have a little party and they make a little Devani card. I don't know what the white parents make of it! I don't think they understand what it's about!

What would Susan do differently? What opportunities would she have to do things differently? Who determined that things should be done this way?

> Well, I think it's always been done that way. Staff, I think have decided. Because you find at Ede time a lot of the Moslem children are away anyway, for the day. And when they come back we have a party.

But was Susan happy with this arrangement?

> Well, I think it's the best we can do under the circumstances. I think the Moslem parents appreciate it. They quite like it. Sometimes they send

> food in. That sort of thing.

Susan had rarely mentioned the parents. How much was the school a part of the community? What involvement was there?

> The parents can come into the school pretty well anytime. They come in with the children in the morning. But, then again, a lot of the Bengali mothers can't speak English, or have very little English, so you can't have that much communication with them.

How did Susan try and overcome this language barrier as a teacher?

> Well, you may find yourself sort of speaking pidgin English to them or you get a child to interpret. Perhaps somebody in the class. Some of the younger children are very good at interpreting.

How did Susan view the National Curriculum in the light of the unique problems facing her school? What did she think about the curriculum planners? Had they taken Susan's problems into account? After all, her's wasn't the only school in England which operated in a multi-cultural environment.

> Well, I think it's too young to test children. I do believe we should have a National Curriculum, a framework, for the core subject, but not as detailed and as prescriptive as that. I mean this is absolutely ridiculous, this implementation. At the end of the day I would rather just do a pencil and paper test. I think it would be fair to everybody. The administration would be easy and you would have a clear result. With this, I mean, I could see that different teachers would mark different children with different marks. It really depends on how the teacher is going to allocate the marks, doesn't it?

We turned again to the particular problems Susan faced in her school.

> Well, I feel I've got to keep the National Curriculum in mind and I've got to try and be one jump ahead of it and anticipate what's going to come up in it and the form it's going to take and make sure that I have presented the information in that form to my children before hand. Like the test about the poster. I mean most of them would fail because they wouldn't know what it meant. But I will make sure I have done these things so that they are familiar with the language and they will know what is required.

Many of Susan's children, though, had poor English. How would this affect her judgement of their progress against the National Curriculum? Was there any way of taking their English language problems into account?

> Well, I don't know that the National Curriculum does. Because, on the one attainment target in English, the first one, speaking and listening, I mean, I could see how many of our children would come out fairly low, but I can see that they won't. They'll be given the benefit of the doubt. They're not fluent English speakers. They haven't got a wide vocabulary, they've got a very restricted vocabulary, although they use it effectively. But you know, some of those children, they are very bright, they are going to do better as they go along, so I think you're going to mark them up. I might be giving a Level 2 to a child in my area that wouldn't get a level 2 say in a white area in a good middle class school.

But hadn't Susan already explained that her moderation group were all very similar schools?

> Yes, but we have complained about that!

However, it seemed that Susan was prepared, on a personal level, to compensate for her children's current inability to express themselves in English by marking them on their future potential; her assessment would not actually reflect their current performance. Yet, she wanted to be in a moderation group that did include schools from middle class areas. Wouldn't her prejudice be exposed when her children were compared with children in middle class areas? Did she really want to have her children's educational levels exposed in this way?

> Well, if it's going to mean anything. So I mean, are we going to say in a few years time, " Oh, well, this child's a Level 2. Well, which school did he come from? Oh, well, a Level 2 there means a Level 1 here!" But if you look here, at the Level 2. "Listen attentively and respond to stories and poetry". Well, all the children do that! "Speak freely to the teacher. Make verbal and non-verbal responses as appropriate". Well, they all do that. "Respond to an increasing range and complexity of classroom instructions". Now, that *complexity*, that's a key word there! So I think that most of the

> children in my class will get a Level 2 anyway, not a Level 3. And yet they can't really speak the language, fluent English.

We talked about the word, complexity. Was this something the teachers would be talking about at their moderation?

> Well, actually, do you know how long the moderation meeting is scheduled for? One and a half hours! With all these schools together, right?

R How many schools would be there?

S Eight. And this is for the three core subjects and all the attainment targets.

R How many teachers would attend this meeting?

S Well, I'm going along with the teacher who teaches in the parallel class beside me. The Head reckons she's going, because she wants to know what's going on. And one of the other teachers wants to know what's going on. So she's going to sneak in too. It's ridiculous. This is supposed to be just for the teachers who are actually doing the assessment. But so many people are keen to go I think the place is going to be pretty full.

The meeting was going to take place after school. Susan told me that meetings were called "twilight meetings". I had never heard of this expression before. In the authorities I had worked in, meetings were never held after school like this. What did Susan think would be discussed at her "twilight" meeting?

> I think we will just look at examples of children's work and say which level you would put them into.

Susan said again that she would rather have been in a cluster of mixed ability schools. How were the clusters chosen? Did she know?

> Really, I don't know. The lists just came around to the schools and we looked at the schools we were with and they were much of a muchness.

We returned to the subject of teacher assessment. Susan had been teaching for seventeen years. She must have done a great deal of assessment over that period of time. In what way was her assessment different now given that she supported the introduction of some kind of National Curriculum?

> When I was in the Juniors we used to do the NFER (National Foundation for Educational Research) in English, maths and I think it was a general knowledge wasn't it? No, I think it was like an IQ. There were three tests and that went down on their record cards. They were done in the first, second, third and fourth year Juniors. Each Junior year. And I think that was done in most of the Sandwell schools.

Did Susan think this was done all over England?

> No, I think it varied. It was a school decision. But most schools did it, particularly in Sandwell. And in Sandwell we used to have the second year Junior survey where they surveyed all the children for maths, English and their IQ.

I wanted to know what happened to these results. Were they made public?

> Yes! I don't think we had individual schools. But you knew. Each school was given a list of the children's results. But the authority results were available. A graph. So you could see if standards were going up or going down.

Susan had obviously had considerable experience with testing. What was the difference between those tests and the ones she was administering now?

> Also, in the school I was in at that time, we also had a maths scheme. It was very flexible. Lots of books and lots of equipment and we had maths test at the end of the year. About four pages just to cover the topics we had taught. Results went on the school report.

I asked again why she felt under a different kind of pressure with the new tests?

> S We didn't teach for the NFER. It was just a one off little test. You never taught for that.
>
> R How long did it take?
>
> S About twenty minutes - a half an hour. Each one.

Did Susan feel that she was teaching to tests now?

> Oh yes! I yes, I feel I am teaching for the National Curriculum. Yes! I am teaching towards those targets.

But, before the National Curriculum, what would Susan have been teaching for?

> Well, I think probably I would have in mind numeracy and literacy and a good general knowledge and you know, I would have different subjects in mind. I would think, well I must cover this, you know. What I thought the child should cover.

Would Susan have constructed her own weekly, monthly or term programmes herself or would the school have co-ordinated that? How was it organized before the National Curriculum?

> Well, you just made out your own timetable and stuck it on the wall! The Head had a copy! And you had a maths scheme, you had an English scheme.

How were they chosen?

> Well, somebody in charge. Somebody with a post of responsibility for drawing up that scheme. Actually, it's been there for a long time. It's just altered or added to occasionally. Usually, it's tied in with the reading scheme. . . . Comprehension sheets that go with it, right? And then, the teaching of reading and writing was up to you.

But the maths and English schemes were not chosen by Susan, but by somebody in charge of that curriculum in the school?

> Yes! We did Scottish maths. But we helped choose. Previously we had done Fletcher and people weren't very happy with it. . . . We had a few staff meetings and we chose that for a number of reasons. The work books didn't have too many written instructions. Because with our children, if they can't read then you've got to explain the words and you know, you would never get to the maths would you? And also, the Juniors at that time were using the Scottish maths, so we thought it was a good idea for them.

I returned to the topic of assessment again. How was Susan's working week different now with regard to assessment? How much would she have controlled herself, and how much would have been externally applied?

> Now, when I'm teaching something, I'm keenly observing if the children really understand it and do they know it and if somebody came in and asked them, would they know it? Because, when this National Curriculum first came out a lot of people thought that other people would be coming in from outside to test the children. You know, that it wouldn't be administered by the class teacher. So I think, that's still in the backs of some people's mind, that other people may be coming in and testing them.

I asked Susan who she was referring to, the children, or her!

> Well, both! Yes! Because it was first thought when the National Curriculum came out that outside assessors would come in. A team would come in and test the children.

But wasn't Susan assessing her children all the time before, anyway?

> Oh yes! All the time! But it was in a much more relaxed sort of way, wasn't it? I mean everything was more relaxed, although I think teaching has always been a difficult job, but you went in and did what you thought was best for the children. You planned your writing, your reading. You know, you built on it in the way that you thought was best. Whereas now, you've got all the demands of the National Curriculum in mind. You think, "Oh, I must do some dictionary work, some reference book work." Now, actually this does crop up in the way we taught before, doesn't it? The children are using dictionaries. They are using reference books. But having to fill in a chart that they can use effectively, you know. Know your alphabetical order, then you're going to watch that more keenly aren't you? I mean the reference books. The kids used them as they needed them. Now, you're having whole lessons on using reference books and using dictionaries so you can tick off if they can use them.

Susan had talked twice about watching children more closely. Was this a good thing or a bad thing?

> Well, I think it's a bad thing actually. Because I think there comes a time when a child is ready to use a dictionary or a reference book, right? And they come to that in a very natural sort of way. Whereas now, I feel that I'm pushing dictionary work in front of their faces before they're ready for

> it! I wouldn't have done that before. But having said that, I mean we've got to do alphabetical order and the use of the dictionary. I've got 28 children and I've got 6 dictionaries. Right? The teacher next door's got 6, right? So I borrow her six. But they can't share because they're not always on the same page. So I have to root around, look for dictionaries and go down to the library and borrow a few.

What were Susan's chances of getting 28 dictionaries by next year?

> Well, we got 6 last year and we have been promised some more after Easter. But after Easter we're starting our testing.

Was Susan facing any other problems with regard to lack of equipment?

> Well, yes! I mean you take the example I gave you earlier of creating electric circuits. With the class last year I had batteries and bulbs. I had an activity afternoon and we would have one table and would use these and make things. And they were always there. They did them every week so they were always working every week. Now we've run out of batteries and bulbs. Although the children have done it this time, they haven't done it for about a month because we've got no batteries and bulbs, so they'll have forgotten how to do it. You know, with infants you have to have these things available and let them build on it all the time and become familiar with it because you can do something with them say, this week, and in a month's time they've forgotten what it is. They'll think they probably did it last year. You know, a month's a very long time for an infant isn't it!

What did Susan feel could be done about that?

> Well, I think we need more money. More resources. Of course, the unfortunate thing about the National Curriculum is that it is coming in at the same time as LMS (Local Management of Schools).

How had LMS affected Susan's school?

> Well, our school is small so, although the Head is sort of managing the budget, she hasn't got complete control over it as yet. But she will next year. What I'm finding is, money is obviously tight. We've got cheap pencils, cheap writing books, warped rulers, grotty crayons, coloured pencils that snap when you sharpen them. We've got all this cheap rubbish in the room. Whereas, if I went back ten years ago, you know they used to order from these firms which dealt specifically with schools. I mean all the children had a good quality pencil, good writing book, good crayons, you

> know, colouring pencils, good equipment. Now you've got a load of rubbish.

Did Susan think this made any difference?

> Yes, I do! With the Infants I've spent hours sharpening pencils. Last year I was so annoyed I went out and bought a packet of pencils. I couldn't stand it any longer. And one year we had these awful blue pencils and the lead kept falling out! Now you know, it's bad enough with our children to try and get them to settle down to work and concentrate on what they're doing without their pencils snapping and the lead falling out!

Susan had become quite animated! Who had ordered the below standard equipment?

> The Head!

How did Susan feel LMS would affect her job?

> Well, the way it affects me, because I'm now 52, I feel that older people won't be wanted because they cost more, because they're at the top of their salary. Schools are looking for youngsters they can manipulate and obviously pay them less money. You're an expensive commodity in the school.

Did Susan feel she might lose her job?

> No, I don't think I'll lose my job. No! But I think that might come!

Susan talked about two schools that had opted out and how they seemed to have been given much more money by the government. She had heard that the teachers had been given a bonus. Her school was in a poor area and the parents could not contribute in the same way as children in the richer areas in the South East.

> I was reading one of the Sunday papers a few months ago . . . . Down in the South East the parents had raised as much money as the capitation allowance for schools. They matched it! So they were able to buy computers, pay for trips, good books for the library, right? Whereas, in a place like hours you're lucky if you raise a couple of hundred a year. So it's the poor schools which suffer again isn't it?

I wanted to know how Susan felt about her job.

> Well, I am absolutely fed up with it. Most people of my age just feel they want to get out of teaching. This isn't the job we came into. This isn't the job we have always done. We've got the National curriculum to cope with. It takes hours and hours of filling in forms. It's very time consuming. Although you've got to spend all that amount of time in your preparation, having to do the National Curriculum has cut down the time you have to spend on preparation. You just haven't got the same amount of time to get into town, to got to the library, to go to the multi cultural resource centre, to go to the EDC, the Educational Development Centre and go to libraries. You just haven't got much time at all. Plus, at the end of the day, you're very tired.

I asked Susan if she had thought about how much time she was spending outside of her actual teaching time. She told me that she hadn't added it up but that it was "colossal".

> I know last year, although the National Curriculum started with Year 1 last year, I was in Year two and we did it as well as a pre-run for this year. And all I do know is that in the Easter holidays I spent three days in this room doing records from eight o'clock in the morning until 8 o'clock at night. Quite a few weekends as well. I can't sit down and do an hour here and an hour there. You know, I need a good clear run.

I was interested to know how Susan saw the role of the Head Teacher. "The Head was now a Manager," she replied. At one time the school had 8 classes and the Deputy Head had a class. I was surprised to hear that the school now had only 6 classes and 2 full-time administrators. The Deputy Head no longer taught. Susan complained that she had to teach 28 children which made her job much more difficult than it was 10 years ago.

> You've got a lot of people handing you bits of paper, drawing your attention to this and your attention to that and it's just very time consuming.

I asked Susan how *much* different it was from ten years ago, besides just the amount of paper that was being shuffled around. Susan pointed out that the school was short of money, short of books, short of equipment. She felt that the salary being used to pay one of the administrators could be better spent hiring a couple of teacher aides. She believed it would be better for the school.

> Rather than, say, another teacher coming and, say, telling you what to do and coming up with ideas, that sort of thing. At the end of the day, I'm the one who has got to go into the classroom and do the job. Right?

I pursued this with Susan, because she was really quite agitated about it. I wanted to know who it was that came and told her what to do.

> Well, your Deputy and your Head. Drawing your attention to these books, these schemes, all the latest materials.

How did Susan feel about having two full-time administrators running a school with six classrooms. "It's a farce, isn't it," she replied. And, after laughing, she went on to explain that there were also three ethnic minority school teachers, one full-time and two part-time. There were also two part-time aides - a nursery nurse aide and a reception aide. Susan re-iterated that she did not want to have two administrators when there was such a pressing need for teaching help. She wanted someone who would come in and "take away jobs I do like mixing up paint, or putting out scissors or cutting up card. This sort of stuff. You know?" Susan explained that there were no parent volunteers in her school. There had been some in the past but parent involvement was spasmodic.

We talked about the role of the district advisors. "There is a guy. He comes in occasionally and sees the Head and has a cup of coffee. Quite pleasant, but let's face it - what does he know about infants?" Susan laughed again.

> He seems quite pleasant, as I said, but he hasn't got a clue, has he? . . . I wish to goodness they (the advisors) would clear off! I mean, I've been teaching a long time. I mean, all I want to do is teach the children to read and write and do their number work and do some nice art work and general things. I wish everyone would just get off my back!

So I asked Susan if she could ever see that happening. "No!" She replied. Susan was so hard pressed that she was having to teach reading at dinner time (lunch time).

> Up until this last year or two on the Friday lunch time - (I know this is irrelevant) but I always walked down to the shops, or occasionally I might go up to the market for something. I haven't been out at lunch time for the last year. I'm having a group of readers in because I haven't had time to, you know, do any reading in the morning because of the type of work we are now doing.

I asked Susan to describe her school day.

> I get to school about 8.15. We don't have to. We don't start until quarter to nine. But having said that the children are supposed to be in by ten to nine but it's ten past before they come in. They come in dribs and drabs. I mean. You know. . . . The children finish at three fifteen. We finish at three thirty five.

I asked Susan whether the teachers ever discussed the contract they were working under. After a bitter dispute between teacher unions and the government, a teacher's contract was imposed by the government. Teachers were expected to work 1250 hours a year, although in England and Wales there was a stipulation that the Head teacher could also ask teachers to work beyond those hours if it was reasonable. Susan replied that the contractual obligations of teachers were never discussed. I asked her if any of the teachers in her school were ever doing those hours and she said "No, they are all doing a lot more! It seems to me - that the teachers - I really am amazed. I know we've lost our negotiation rights - but the more they're piled on the more they're prepared to do!" I asked Susan if she had an explanation for that and she said.

> "No!", she said, "I don't know! It's an interesting situation!"
>
> R But you're doing it yourself!"
>
> S Well, I am! But I am fighting it, actually! But I know I've got to fill in these things. But I just think, look, with a bit of luck I can retire - next holiday!"

I asked Susan what the effect of that would be if she just didn't address the

National Curriculum. She replied that her parallel teacher seemed to find the time to go through the charts that had to be filled out and query some of the comments made. She was surprised that this teacher found the time. Susan had spent a great deal of time the previous year filling in these charts. I asked Susan if anyone in the school was complaining about the amount of time it was taking and she said she thought it would be mainly the Year Two teachers. She believed that they would be picking up the majority of the work.

> I feel, I want to move out of it! I just wouldn't mind getting back to the reception. If I don't get retirement before the holiday I just want to get out of it. Why should I do all this work?

I asked Susan if she felt the other teachers were doing less.

> I think they are doing their share of the work. But they haven't got all this pressure. They haven't got all the form filling and all the testing. It would be one thing if you got a bonus for doing it!"

I asked Susan to talk a little more about the pressure she was feeling and whether teachers working in schools in "middle class" areas would be feeling it more because of parental expectations being higher. Susan had explained how many of the children's parents could not speak English and sometimes they appeared not to have particularly high expectations for their children.

> I think that in the middle class areas it would probably be very important for the schools to have meetings with the parents and go through the National Curriculum with them and explain it to them. I know of a parent who has gone out and bought all the three documents for her child . . . down in the South East . . . she thinks they're a marvelous idea. She is a secondary teacher. I mean you open it up, and read it, and it makes sense. But you come to do the same thing here, and it's very different. Particularly in an area like ours. I think it may be less difficult in some ways than in middle class areas. There you would probably be able to get into it straight away. But there again you would have parental pressure.

Susan continued on the theme of disparity between regions. She felt that parents in more affluent areas would go to great lengths to try to ensure their children would do well in the tests.

> They (SEAC) brought out a list of reading books which you have to use for the level 1,2, 3 testing. Well, certain book shops in the South East are sold out! Parents have bought the books, right?

I wanted Susan to tell me about how she felt about the National Curriculum, because she had mentioned to me a number of times that she thought it was a good idea. I asked her how she thought it would affect teaching generally and speculate about how schools would be changed by this new policy.

> I think it will depend on how it's implemented. Say, with the science. They're not going to test all the targets. They'll probably just test two or three. Well, if we knew they were just testing two or three, that would relieve an awful lot of pressure.

I asked Susan whether, if only some of the curriculum was being tested, she would bother teaching all of it.

> I would, but I would be more relaxed about it. I wouldn't be thinking of it in the back of my mind. Really, I must go over this again and make sure that they know it, you know. I wouldn't feel under so much pressure.

I was interested in knowing whether, once the testing and National Curriculum were familiar features of the classroom, teachers would not feel so intimidated by the demands made on them.

> I think, in five years time, you would be more familiar with it. Also, by that time, I think a lot of publishing companies will have brought out materials for the teachers to use. At the moment, say in science, we're buying books here there and everywhere to cover different topics. In five years time I should think they'll be good science schemes tied in with the National Curriculum which you would just use and work through. A lot of the pressure would have gone.

Would Susan use these schemes?

> Yes, if they were in the school! At the moment, I have to make up my own stuff.

I discussed with Susan the fact that before the introduction of the National Curriculum she would have made up her own stuff anyway. Susan's comments regarding science teaching were revealing.

> Before, what teachers did mostly was work on the seasons, animals, hibernation, water, floating, sinking, cooking. This was your science. And these are lovely things children understand and enjoy. Now you've got to put a lot more into it. You haven't got time for those sorts of things.

Did Susan think the children would enjoy their science less now that the curriculum was much wider and prescribed for them?

> Oh, I think so, yes. I think a lot of this stuff, they will have to revise it. A lot of it is too difficult. It is above their heads. It's outside of their experience. Particularly for children under 7.

This really bothered her, so she thumbed through the science curriculum listing some of the things the children needed to know.

> They have to explain when night occurs. Know that the day length changes throughout the year. Know that we live on a large spherical self-contained planet called Earth. Know that the inclination of the Sun in the sky changes during the year. Be able to measure time with a sundial. Now, most of them can't tell the time! We do our clock at half past and learn to count in fives going round. Now - whoever thought of that? The child has to know that the earth spins around, know the orbit of the earth and the tilt of the earth, I suppose. About three different things they have to think of at the same time.

We talked about the fact that the most difficult of these concepts was in fact at Level 3 and that there was quite a jump between Level 2 and Level 3. Even so, Susan was deeply sceptical of the requirements expected of 6/7 year old children.

> I mean if you asked most adults to explain these things, I mean, would they be able to explain it?

Did Susan feel she was the only person who had trouble with these expectations? She didn't answer, but went on to tell me that there were quite a few parts of the science curriculum she had difficulty with, in terms of teaching her children. She had spoken to her science advisor about it. She thought this person was probably a teacher who had taught science, but she didn't know for sure. I asked her how she would teach the science to her class and she said, "Oh, I'll just forget about it!" So I asked Susan how she would deal with this if one of the compulsory SATs turned out to be on this part of the curriculum. "Well, I think it's ridiculous," She replied. "I don't know whoever put it in for an infant!"

Although Susan had already decided that she couldn't expect her children to do this work because she believed it would be a waste of time trying to teach it, she said she felt she would be under some pressure because it was included in the curriculum. But she also felt that she might not be under pressure, because she had already decided the targets were unreasonable. She wasn't sure how she felt.

We moved on then to talk about how the children were going to be assessed in the next few weeks. Susan spoke in a conspiratorial fashion about rumours she had heard. Where did they come from, I asked?

> I don't know where they come from. You see, nobody knows what form this is going to take. I mean, it has been suggested that we won't test on all the targets for science.

At this point Susan was thumbing through a number of documents she had on her lap. I asked her if she knew how the marking was going to work, but she was unsure. She had seen some suggestions from a SEAC document. She thought that there would a grading made by herself and another determined by the results of the SATs. As far as she was concerned, it would be the SATs ones that would count if there was a difference between the two.

> If you want yours to count - they've done poorly on the SAT, then you have to approach the authority. There's going to be a special procedure for it . . . Someone has to come down and make a judgement! I can't see anyone bothering with that actually.

I was curious to know how Susan saw the tests being used in her school after the SAT results came out.

> We don't know. We don't know. Nobody knows. This is the worst thing about the National Curriculum. We don't know what's going to happen. Look, if we had the whole goddam thing in front of us. If we knew what was happening, at least we'd know what to expect. We don't know what form the tests are going to take. We don't know how they're going to be implemented. How they're going to be marked. If they're going to be tested on every target. How many SATs they're going to be. We just don't know.

We confirmed the date of our conversation. We were talking on January 29th. The SATs were to be administered when schools returned after the Easter break. Susan's school had already decided that they would try and do all the tests in the first three weeks even though six weeks was allocated for the task. Susan thought that this was a decision made by the Education Authority because, as she said, "the Head goes to all those meetings!" Susan didn't think she would see the tests until the last week of the Spring term (just before Easter). The plan, it seemed, was to give teachers the chance to spend the Easter holiday planning the administration of the tests. Susan erupted at this point.

> Oh my God, I've got better things to do with my Easter holidays. I'm exhausted. I think it's very unfair.

Susan was hoping that as soon as she got the tests there would be a meeting and some decisions would be made about how the tests would be administered. She had been told that she would get help, but didn't know what the nature of it would be. She knew she had to test, but didn't know what the tests would look like, or what targets would be tested. She did believe, however, that in English, all the targets would be tested because there were only five.

Testing reading, however, was another issue. Children had to read a 100 word passage and this test would take place outside the time allocation for the other SATs. Even so, Susan said she felt happy with the English tests because from what she knew they were going to be quite straight forward. The maths was more problematic. Susan had heard about a film someone had seen demonstrating the addition test and it appeared to be someone throwing a dice and adding up the numbers on three different dice and making sums. Susan was concerned that her children wouldn't be able to do this test, because they had never done anything with dice.

> I mean, they can add three figures, a lot of them, you know, 2, 6, 4, but to do it with dice, well, they wouldn't be familiar with that. Particularly the Asian children so I would want to give them some practice with it before hand. But I don't know whether I should be doing that or not! But I shall do it!

Was Susan training her children to pass the tests? I asked her about this.

> Well, I can't just go in with Asian children and play that game because they would be asking me questions like, "What do you mean?" "What have we got to do?" "Have we got to write it here?" You know what I mean. They'd be saying . . . I'd have to explain - you have to add up how much it is.

I suggested that the Year Two teachers would feel more comfortable with the tests a year or two on, because they would know what to expect. Susan agreed. I asked her if she thought that results would improve simply because teachers would be more familiar with the tests and the kinds of activities children might have to engage in.

> Of course they will. Yes. You'll be teaching children specifically for that! And brothers and sisters and parents will! And the government will say, look how standards have risen! Won't they?

Susan laughed.

I wanted to know, therefore, whether Susan felt there was any educational advantage to what the Government had introduced. Did she think that standards might rise? Or would it be just the ability to do tests that would improve?

> I think ability to do tests will increase. Teachers will be teaching with tests in the back of their minds all the time. That will be a shadow hanging over them. I don't know that there will be an all round improvement in children's education. I think they will probably know more scientific facts. But at the end of the day, I think they might lose out on things like art and creative writing and literature and other things, you know, which you have had time for children to enjoy. I think a lot of that will go.

Perhaps, though, when the National Curriculum becomes established and teachers are more familiar with the requirements they will be able to find more time to do the things Susan felt were falling by the wayside?

> I think that in five years time this will be much easier for teachers. At the moment, trying to teach some of the maths and some of the science, fumbling around trying to get books from here, books from there. You know, to cover the things I'm not covering at the moment. As I said, in a few years time there will be schemes we can work through and the job will be much easier. The testing will be much easier and I think there will be some changes in the National Curriculum.

I asked Susan whether, having overcome the obstacle of working under the conditions of the unknown and the stresses that brings about and which she had identified as the worst part of this policy implementation, what did she believe teaching would be like? Once the newness had worn off, would it be completely mechanical, for example? The job might seem to be easier, but was it what Susan believed education should be?

> I think that in about 10 years time people will be writing books about what

> children are missing out on and what children can't do is this, that or the other. And where our National Curriculum falls down. I mean, there will be changes, won't there? I think the content will change. A lot of the difficulties will be . . .

I felt, from this conversation, that Susan was a supporter of the National Curriculum, despite her reservations about the effect it appeared to be having, at the moment anyway, on the children she taught.

> No, well, I do think we should have some sort of common framework, some sort of standardization. And, parents, should really know how their children are, if they're *roughly* up to where they should be with their reading. I mean, you do get schools, particularly in poor areas where, let's face it, children can hardly read and the parent goes up to teacher and she says, "Well she's *really* working hard, what a lovely child, making great progress." And then, when the child leaves secondary school without any GCSE's or whatever they call them now, they realise, you know, it wasn't what they thought.

I wanted to know why Susan thought teachers would do this.

> I think, particularly in poorer schools, teachers do, because, I mean, you get children, say, these children come into school with so little really, don't they? And they have made a lot of progress, compared with, if you bear in mind their starting point. They have made a lot of progress. But they are trying, but they haven't the same progress as say, children from white middle class areas.

I asked Susan why children in poorer schools wouldn't make the same progress?

> I suppose, if you put poor children all in together, you really haven't got enough people to set the standard, have you? . . . Children can only judge their performance by looking at the other children around them - the class, can't they? How well they're doing!

It seemed that for Susan, peer expectation was an important part of educational progress.

> Oh, yes. The standard in say a school in a poor area compared with the standard in a school in a white middle class area, there would be quite a difference between the two.

We talked about the influence of the home on performance in school.

> If parents are educated themselves, it helps, doesn't it? If they are literate and read books and take an interest in the child and have an idea. I mean, I would know how well my child was doing at school. *You* would know, wouldn't you, if you had a child. Even if you weren't a teacher you would know, really, how well they were progressing. Whereas, a lot of parents don't. They rely a lot on the teacher. In poorer areas, the parents rely more on the teacher. I mean, middle class parents can be quite critical, can't they?

Susan had been in her school for some time, and she acknowledged that it was not an easy place to work in so I asked her why she stayed. With an audible sigh she replied:

> Well, it's a job. That's why I'm there. It's a job. I'm not going any further in teaching. I just want to get out! I quite enjoy teaching, I quite enjoy working with young children. I quite like working in the area I'm working in. You know, the children are lovely. Got a lot of problems and nevertheless, I don't mind that! But I think this is an extra pressure, having to assess them, you know, in these three core subjects. I don't think it's very fair to them. They haven't had the same chance as children in white areas, have they?

But Susan had mentioned to me earlier on, when she was talking about reading, that the children she taught were quite bright.

> Yes, Rita, but you have problems you see. I've got two children in my class, now. They went to Bangladesh last October! Now the little girl, her English, she's quite a bright little thing. She'll come back any day now. And her English will be . . . well, we'll be back to square one, almost. Now, I don't think it would be fair to assess her. If she had been in school all the time since October, she struck me as being quite a capable little thing, you know, really quite good, and I think she would be doing really quite well. But she'll come back. And she'll have to be assessed. It's not fair is it?

I asked Susan how, in the context of the school she was working in, she felt about herself as a teacher.

> Well, up until this National Curriculum came in you felt you were doing a good job. A job that needed to be done. A very demanding job. There's a lot of satisfaction in it. Whereas, now, you just feel there's an awful lot of pressure in it. A lot of the satisfaction and contentment you got out of it, well . . . you're just going into school doing your job, and that's difficult enough, you know. You see, progress for these children - well, it depends how you measure progress. If you take these two children who will come back from Bangladesh. I mean, how are you going to measure their progress really, when they won't have been to school for about six months?

I asked Susan whether it was true that before the National Curriculum she wouldn't have worried too much about this. After all, these were circumstances outside her control.

> Well, I wouldn't have. You would have just dealt with the child. You'd just give them a lot of extra help getting them up on their reading and work again and thinking, great!

So why couldn't Susan do that now?

> Well, because I will have to put them through these tests, won't I?

Would Susan *have* to do this?

> Yes! Yes!

Because she was obliged to do this by law?

> Yes! It isn't clear. Children who enter the country, I think there is six months after they enter the country before they are assessed. There is some arrangement.

Susan clearly felt under pressure from this situation so I asked her where she thought it was coming from? Was she creating it herself? Where was it coming from?

> Partly from myself, because I feel responsible to a certain degree. I think, well, if a lot of these children come out low Level 2, is it a reflection on me? You know?
>
> R Even after 17 years of teaching?
>
> S Even after 17 years of teaching! I mean, I wonder how many teachers are going to cook the books! It's been said to me by

> people in higher up positions, "Who's going to check what you fill in?" You know, hint, hint! It's a bit much isn't it! That's why I say, at the end of the day the paper and pencil test is the only fair test! Isn't it? It's like these blessed GCSE's.

Susan had mentioned that teachers had "cooked the books" as far as marking was concerned. What kinds of pressures did Susan feel she was under to do this herself? Administrators had made these comments to her, so perhaps they also felt under some pressure. What did she think?

> I suppose the Director of Education - that lot up in the Education Office -I suppose it does reflect on them to some extent if Sandwell had the lowest scores.

Was this pressure as intense as that which some teachers were feeling? Did Susan feel they were under as much pressure as her?

> Well, yes. It probably does reflect more on them. At the end of the day I could say, "Well, look. I've got excuses. The kids that come in late. Absenteeism is very high. Falling asleep. Poor backgrounds. Often they haven't got the same help from home, the same environment. I can make a lot of excuses. I don't know what excuses they can make!

I asked about the pressure the Head of the school felt.

> Well, I don't know. She doesn't seem all that worried about it. I mean really, I feel the whole relationship has changed, hasn't it. At one time you were all in the same boat, weren't you. Now you feel you've got the Head up there who's watching you because she's the hirer and you're the labourer, aren't you. Right? So the role has changed.

It seemed that Susan had experienced a dramatic change in the way she saw her relationship with the administration. I asked who or what had caused that to happen.

> Well, I suppose it's probably the National Curriculum, isn't it? Children are going to be assessed. Teachers are going to be assessed. And results of schools are going to be published so schools are going to be assessed. And Heads will say - obviously they will talk amongst each other - and they will say, well look - let's have a look at your scores.

It seemed that Heads might be put under a little pressure too. What did Susan think? Who would be checking up on the Heads?

> I suppose the next one up, the advisor and then the people in authority.
> The Director I suppose.

But Susan's Head had not indicated that she felt any pressure. In fact, she had given her teachers very little help. Was this because she was not the head of a middle class school? Susan felt that the middle class schools would cope more easily with the National Curriculum because they would have some very good children in their schools. But at the same time, she felt they might be under more pressure from parents.

Susan was a parent herself. Her three children were no longer in school, but I was interested to know what her reaction would have been if her children had been going through school now.

> Well, all my children were very different. My first one was always well ahead of everything. He would have sailed through it and I wouldn't have given it a second thought. The second one, I would not have wanted him at that age under any pressure. Actually, I would have perhaps kept him at home when the exams were on. When the assessments were on. I just wouldn't have wanted him under pressure. Of course, it would depend on how I thought he would fare in the assessment, wouldn't it. You don't know.

This raised the issue of how parents were reacting to the testing of their children in Susan's school.

> Well, I suppose it depends on what parents think . . . if the parents think the kid will do alright they'll be O.K.

I asked Susan whether she thought those parents who were rushing out to buy the reading books were "collaborating" with the testing process. I drew attention to the fact that I was using a very strong word to describe what I meant. But nevertheless, Susan agreed.

> Let's face it, if you were a Head in a Primary School and you had a reading list and these were the ones that were going to be tested, wouldn't you tell the parents, "Well, you can always read these stories to them!"

But Susan was not in that situation.

> Imagine. I have a few children in at dinner time. Looking at some of these stories to pick out words that they're not familiar with.

I mentioned that in the authority I had most recently worked in there was a home/school reading program. Books went home with children and someone in the family agreed to hear the children read every day. What did Susan think about that? Again she whispered,

> Perhaps I shouldn't say this, because we are supposed to approach children to take books home. I encourage them not to! Because they come back in such a stinking mess. I mean, smelling of fish and chips and grease. Scribbled on and when I give the child a reading book I say to them, "Go and get a book. Pick a clean one. And we'll keep the books clean." I mean, would you like your child to bring a stinking book home?

I had some sympathy with Susan. In the previous year I had decided that my class were so far behind in their maths work they could take their maths books home. This was actively discouraged in my school and I had run into some grief over this myself. The school was so hard pressed for curriculum materials they were afraid they would never see them again.

> Well, that's another thing. I had one child. Last week, I had the mother in. She didn't speak English. I had the father in. Typical Bengali father. Spoke beautiful English. The child couldn't speak a word!

I stopped Susan here because this intrigued me. I asked her to explain.

> Well, he was typical. Brought the first wife over from Bangladesh and the children are brought up by the mother at home. He was a quiet, withdrawn child. Anyway, I explained to him that I was going to give him something to do at home. I wanted to discuss it with him and get him to do it. Anyway, the father comes in the next day wanting to know what I was

> trying to tell his wife. Obviously, the wife didn't understand. So I explained to him. He spoke beautiful English. I said, "Look, this child doesn't know his numbers." I mean, he would count to ten, but if you say, "How many here?" - he would say, "One, two, nine, three, five!" You know what I mean - no number concept. So he said he would do this. So I spent a whole dinner time setting up all this work. Parcelling up work sheets and books and sent them out. I haven't seen them since! . . . . There are a few children in the class who would take books home and bring them back. And they will take it in a bag. I insist they put it in a bag, instead of kicking it across the playground. And bring it back. And that's fine. What we do have, we do have a few story books. They can take them home.

Susan had more stories.

> There was another Bengali lad. Pretty hopeless too. His Mum came in. She would pinch me, you know. "Teacher, you give him work to do at home!" And all that, you know? So I gave him the work and it came back beautifully done by his older sister. So I wrote back, "Please do it yourself!" Then she comes in, she says, "He does nice work, my son!" This is the area. This is what you're up against! And I've given him more work now, but I haven't had it back yet. It looks a bit lost.

Did Susan feel that the National Curriculum was devised to inform parents?

> The government said, "We'll fix the teachers. We're giving you good school. We'll make the teachers do their job, right? And you will have control over them and know what they're doing. But, of course, it's been a great failure, really, hasn't it?

I asked Susan to tell me what had failed.

> Well, take the idea of governors for the school. You've got to get a quorum. You've got to get 25% isn't it? To attend, before you can pass a motion. Well, they can't get 25% of the parents to attend.

Was this just in Susan's school?

> Even in good areas. Even in places like Sutton Coldfield, Solihull. Very difficult.

How did Susan know this? From press reports?

> Well, I know a friend of Jim's (her husband). He was a governor on one of

> these schools. He was amazed. But when you think that all the governors are issued with copies of each National Curriculum guide. They've got to read through this. They've got to read through all the SEAC stuff. All the school policies. Right? Now. And then they've got to make decisions about the running of the school and all of this. And that's going to take a lot of time and governors aren't going to do that. Would you do that for nothing?

I replied that I didn't know. But Susan was adamant that she wouldn't.

> I think ours just go in. Sit there with the Head and just support the Head and they haven't got an idea of what's going on in the school and I don't think they have any influence.

Did Susan think that in, say, Solihull, things would be different because this was a better area?

> Yes, I think, obviously in good schools you would have parents who would have some idea of running the school and educational standards and all this sort of thing. But at the same time I don't think they will have any influence on what goes on in the school. The only thing I suppose you have got. If the parents want to complain about the school and make a complaint to the governors then I suppose that could be brought up at a meeting. So I suppose the parents have got a channel to complain about the Head or the teacher. But apart from that, I don't think they will have an influence on the standard of education in the school or what is taught in the school.

Even in a very good school?

> Yes. Say, you take sex education in the primary school. That's got to be approved by the governors. All heads say is, "We answer children's questions as they arise in this manner and support the idea of the family unit and we answer the questions that are asked." Perhaps in the general course of science in the top classes the reproductive tract will probably be mentioned in the course of that. But that's it. And it's left to the school.

I was interested to know about the governors in Susan's school. Was there an attempt to attract representatives from the different groups in the community?

> Well, it's been very hard to get one of each. You have to search around to get one of each . . . We have one Bengali, one Sikh, and we had to search,

> one white, yes. The chair is white I think.

This surprised me. Susan's school was in a predominantly Asian community.

> Well, it's very difficult to get anybody. There's one bloke everyone's trying to avoid. He's got himself - well, he . . . had a child in the Nursery, a child in our school and a child in the Juniors. He was very keen to become a governor on each. He's Bengali. We think he's the only one who we think is likely to make enquiries about the National Curriculum because he's very proud of all these documents he's been given. He's even had a card printed - Governor of. . . . He had a special card printed to say he was Governor of our school.

But why were they avoiding him? Susan laughed. She didn't know. She laughed again. I commented that he sounded very thorough. So why *were* people avoiding him?

> Well, I suppose he's putting himself forward. I can't see any harm in him actually.

It seemed to me that he was doing what the government had asked him to do. He was an interested and informed parent governor. What did Susan think?

> I know. That's right. But that's a bit out of place, I suppose in schools like ours. I mean, I think the guy's quite nice, but I know in the Nursery school they were voting in a new Chairman and he proposed himself and nobody would second it. Obviously, they wanted somebody else. It was a bit mean.

I was curious to know what his children were like in school. Susan said they were very good.

> Very good. Very keen. From what I can gather they all do an hours work before they come to school. Their writing, their number work. Their English is good. Now they went off to Bangladesh for about 6 months a couple of years ago and they came back. But he took work with him and made sure they did it.

Susan had spent some time explaining the difficulties her children experienced with their schooling, but here were some children who obviously did have support from home. We moved on then to discuss the differences amongst children from the Asian community.

> Some years ago we had quite a few Sikh children in our school. Now they have moved out of the area. We still have just a few Sikh children. Pakistani children. A lot of the Pakistani families, actually, have moved out and the Bengali families are moving in. The Sikh children, yes, they were quite good. They were better than the Bengalis. Obviously, I think the children we had, their parents were literate and the mothers particularly. I mean, a lot of the Bengali mothers probably haven't been to school. I don't know, I've no information to know to that extent. But on parents evening they may come up to look at a child's book and they're looking at it upside down. You see. You know. This sort of thing.

Susan had not mentioned gender difference. As she had identified a fairly high illiteracy rate amongst the Bengali mothers she came in contact with, I asked whether there was any difference in the performance between the boys and girls in her classes.

> Not a lot! No. If anything, I think the girls have the edge!

Susan also mentioned that there were women governors.

> In our case it's just a question of grabbing someone. In our case . . . the Head grabs them.

I was interested to know whether, once grabbed, the governors came to meetings.

> You see, what you have - you have your parent governors, your few co-opted governors that the Head can coopt on. A few of those who have been coopted I don't think have ever shown up . . . I've never been to one of these. I don't know when they are. I don't think anybody's interested in them. The whole thing is irrelevant as far as we are concerned. We just have to go through the hoops, right? Nothing is decided. I think at the last meeting there were five people there.

We talked about the fact that Local Management of Schools had been introduced in Susan's area. This meant that governors had considerable powers in determining how the finances would be managed her school. Was she surprised, therefore, that there was so little interest in governors' meetings? Susan was silent. In fact, the conversation returned to the problems of assessment and the work involved.

Susan had been handed a number of assessment sheets in the first term of the school year which she had been asked to complete. In fact, she didn't look at any of them.

> I really should say, yes! But I didn't have time! I was so busy, I didn't have time. . . . I can do that more quickly by teaching the children for a few days than I can looking at those sheets. That doesn't give me information about the child at all, or their behaviour, or what they can do, if they're settling doing their grammar. It just tells me what's been ticked off on there. Very little has been ticked off!

Susan admitted that she had ignored the assessment sheets. It was decided in her school, however, that at the end of the Christmas term the teachers would fill in the National Curriculum record sheets as well as their own school record sheets which were not done until the end of each term anyway.

> We do the National Curriculum record sheets. To date I've done the English and the maths. I have to start the science. I just haven't had the time. They have taken hours.

I wanted to know whether it was taking hours because of actually testing the children, or just taking hours filling them out.

> Just filling them out. And also because I'm not familiar with each target. I have to look it up. There are so many. Look at the work they've done. And refer to my own book and see if they were present when the work was done. If they were present they get a dot . . .

Susan explained that to speed things up she had given them one piece of written work so that she could extrapolate from that whether they had achieved the English targets or not. She was also supposed to retain evidence of children's work.

> It was interesting. I gave the children some writing to do that I thought I would slip in there (in a folder she was to use for retaining 'evidence') but it wasn't as good as they do most of the time so I . . . most of them - I wasn't prepared to put it in. I photocopied something they had done in their book a week or two ago. You know, an average piece of work. Because one or two of them had really messed it up and I thought, "Well, I'm not putting

> that in!"

Did Susan feel that the children knew they were being tested?

> Oh no! I just told them to do it on paper because the Head wanted to see nice work. You know, I put it like that. But I don't know. One or two boys were playing up. One boy, he was just beginning to write and he said, "Oh, mine's crap!" He scribbled on his paper. And I thought, "Oh, my goodness!" And he has been doing such nice work in the last few weeks. And he *can* write. I'm not prepared to put that bit of scribble in because that really doesn't reflect his work. So I photocopied something he had done the week before hand.

What would Susan do if this happened again when they came to do their SATs?

> I don't know. Because with infants I'll tell you this. If you get . . . if the weather is bad and they don't go out to play for a couple of days. Say it's raining heavily. They become very restless. I'm not prepared to test them on a day like that! Or if it's very windy I'm not going to test them on a day like that! I've got to have a day when they're really what I call their normal selves, if you can say such a thing. You know their usual selves. Because that's what reflects what they do most of the time.

I was interested in knowing how Susan was going to approach the tests with the children.

> Well, I'm wondering, you see . . . children in the middle class areas, I hate keep using that expression, will know, because the parents will know what's going on. I wonder what our parents will know. I think a few may know. A lot of them won't know.

I speculated that even if the parents of Susan's children didn't know much about the tests themselves they would probably know that the children were being tested. There had been a lot of talk in the press about the testing and parents might put children under some pressure because of this.

> What I shall be doing with mine is telling them we are going to be doing our work really well because this is the work we are going to keep to show to the Juniors. I'll put it like that, fairly simply. And say, "And you'll all do your best work if you go to bed early and get a good night's sleep and your brain is rested." Because I do have one or two who drop off to sleep! Right? That'll be *my* preparation, not that they'll take any notice! On the

other hand, occasionally children do respond.

Susan didn't feel that her children would be put under much pressure. She showed me the sheets she was going to fill in at the end of the term on her teacher assessment. I asked her how similar this work was to the work being tested by the SATs. "I hope it's going to be fairly similar. As close as I can get it!"

I suggested that part of Susan's strategy was to normalise the SAT work and include it as part of her daily routine. In this way by the time they came to do the tests her children would not find them anything out of the ordinary. It was part of the government's plan, wasn't it, that the SATs should become part of the normal working day? Susan agreed. I said that it would be interesting to see when I visited Susan again in June whether this, in fact, happened.

> Yes! One thing I am a bit worried about is the National Curriculum. They talk about children working in groups. I do think it's wrong to judge a child in a group situation. I really do. Because you get one or two children who lead the group and the rest do follow. And the one or two who are leading it may understand and know what's going on and I'm not sure that the others aren't just copying. So I really do not want to assess group work.

I asked Susan if she had figured out yet how she *was* going to organise the testing.

> I've no idea. I haven't thought about because I've got so much to think about. I'm just putting it out of my mind . . . We'll just wait and see what comes! I really don't want to take the children and test them in groups in another room. I'd rather they worked in the classroom like they do normally . . . If I have to test in groups, I can't test a group within the classroom, with the rest of the children making a noise. Infants can be very noisy. So all you can do is take them into another room. Then, are they going to concentrate? Their eyes are going to be on other things in the room. They're going to be distracted, aren't they?

How much did Susan think the people who constructed these tests thought about these problems?

> Well, I think they gave it very little thought . . . I mean, if you look at some of the things that are down there, these people have very little idea of infants and what they can do. I mean, the effect of weathering on rocks. That's Level 3!

Susan had told me earlier that she had an upset stomach and wasn't feeling well. I thought she looked tired and I turned the tape recorder off. But despite the fact that she was not feeling well and even after I urged her to come downstairs and have a coffee, Susan insisted on showing me more details of the assessments she was having to do and the forms she had to fill out. She talked for more than an hour after I turned the tape off. Much of what she said was a re-iteration of the points she had raised earlier. . Susan finished by saying that she was exhausted by the worry of it all.

Reflections

My conversation with Susan demonstrated both the professional commitment of teachers and their professional disillusionment. She talked about loss of control, lack of time, poor resources, unreasonable policy demands, lack of support, lack of consultation and lack of understanding of the nature of teaching by government departments. Her dry humour hid a deep despair of life in the classroom. Her enjoyment of teaching had been marred by the external world which, like an army in sight of victory, subjugated relentlessly whatever was left of her teaching territory. She found herself, helpless before the tide of change. Even her discovery that the pencils, purchased in a new environment of economic stringency, were too feeble to survive the ravages of a sharpening machine was a poignant message. Circuit boards that a year before provided stimulating scientific enquiry were now disfunctional through lack of battery power. Six dictionaries to be shared amongst twenty eight children, mostly learning English as a second language. Two administrators and three teacher aides coordinated the work of six teachers. Advisors seemed to know little about the age groups they were responsible for. Parents read their children's report cards upside down because they didn't recognize English words. Yet despite these obstacles, Susan taught to the very best of her ability.

Teachers work within multiple sites and contexts. We can see that Susan's working life was made more complicated partly by the environment in which she worked. But although Susan's school had particular problems, all the other teachers experienced conflict for one reason or another. Susan, like most of the teachers I talked with during 1991 functioned as a teacher, an employee, a parent, a woman, a voter, a wife. Professional lives often affected personal lives and personal lives intruded into professional lives. All of the teachers I spoke to resented, to some degree, the time the new curriculum developments consumed. The extra time was inevitably found from what most teachers considered to be personal time, that is evenings and weekends. Many of the teachers worked during their holidays.

Within these multiple contexts, therefore, it is possible to determine at the very least a duality of parallel lives; the public, working life in the school and community, and the private, personal life at home and in the community. Where conflicts and contradictions arose, they appear to have emanated from the difficulty of sustaining sometimes two entirely separate life views. In mediating between them, various imperatives operated in determining what actions should take place. Susan, for example, often found herself deciding between two or three equally pressing directives. These sometimes operated on the mundane level of wanting to find more time to do the shopping, to moral and ethical questions about the rightness and wrongness of public housing, educational financing, political action and poverty. Susan often found herself in conflict between what she personally believed in and what she was obliged to do.

There seemed to be no relief from the day to day decision making process. Susan's working world was always in a state of flux. Even the children she taught were not necessarily in her class from day to day. Sometimes she ran out of equipment. The co-operation of parents varied from day to day and was unpredictable. It was so unpredictable that she often had to change the way she taught. Keeping books in the classroom was a good example. By any stretch of the imagination, Susan's working life was a challenge, especially when she was attempting to mitigate its worst fluctuations. Susan, however, understood that some parts of her working life were outside her control: the lack of sufficient dictionaries, for example. Others, she believed she could take charge of, such as manipulating her record cards.

In summary, we can characterize Susan's working world as one in which she tried to balance the demands of her personal, private world and the demands made by the environment and the state system in which she operated.

Introducing the Other Participants

I needed to remind myself, after I visited Britain in January and February that the teachers I m et with were not actually "testing" yet. The stress most of them were under was related to the requirement that they follow the new National Curriculum guidelines and then assess the attainment targets related to these for Level 2 by March 31st of the end of the Spring Term, whichever fell first. This was the deadline set by the Government. Actually, March 31st was Easter Sunday that year, so it was a meaningless sort of date. Nevertheless, it loomed lilk a threatening cloud on the horizon for the teachers with whom I spoke. Their assessments were going to be compared with the results from the SATs administered in the Summer Term.

I spoke with four other teachers during my first visit, three of whom were teaching Key Stage 1 and one who was working as an unpaid advisor. Their initial comments, like Susan's provided a useful backdrop to my subsequent visit in June and July.

Doreen

Doreen was teaching in North Wales in what she described as a middle class school. Unlike Susan, she had at least one exceptional child who was expected to achieve Level 3. In many ways, Doreen's working life paralleled Susan's. However, she was younger and her own children were still at home. She was also married to a teacher although unlike Susan's husband who had retired, Doreen's was still teaching in a primary school alongside the friend who introduced us. Doreen was just as conscientious as Susan and like her, often worked at home because she couldn't see how she could do her work properly otherwise. However, this was Doreen's second bite at the testing apple because she had been part of the pilot project the year before. Nevertheless, a better grasp of everything did little to reduce her workload. Even though Doreen was meticulous in the way she went about organizing her school day to make adjustments for these new demands she believed the whole exercise was a waste of time.

Patricia

Patricia was not teaching Year Two's. However, she had volunteered to train the teachers who were doing the assessment. I talked with Patricia and Jane together, because they were friends and because our meeting had been arranged with Patricia through a friend of mine who lived next door to her. Patricia had quite a different attitude to the assessment process. She was very committed to it, even when she saw flaws. She genuinely appeared to enjoy the challenge of explaining the process to teachers, even when she was critical of the way it was being put into place. Her own child was also being tested so she had a vested interest in knowing what was going on. Patricia spent a great deal of time explaining how the testing was going to work, and casting aside many of Jane's doubts about their manageability. Patricia didn't mention the effect this was having on her personal life except to say that you always took teaching home with you. "You even sat in church thinking about it!" Patricia, therefore, was an enthusiastic supporter of the National Curriculum and assessment!

Jane

Jane appeared to be in a panic! She was worried that she would not get her assessment done by March 31st even though she understood that the problems were not of her own making. She was concerned that her students would do badly on the tests and it would reflect on her. Her working life appeared to have undergone a radical transformation. Jane mentioned on a number of occasions that she was no longer teaching, just ticking. This was reminiscent of a comment Doreen had made to me. She actually had trained herself from September to Christmas to check off boxes on sheets that she had prepared herself so, as she said, she would "get into the habit of it!" Although Jane didn't say this, I got the impressions that she spent a lot of time ticking boxes too! Jane also mentioned that in her anxiety to get through the attainment targets she also found herself talking faster. But she admitted that the talking wasn't particularly relaxed, because "chat" as she called it, had pretty well disappeared from her classroom.

Mary

I visited Mary in February, but was unable tape our conversation because my car had broken down that morning and I had arrived at the school too late to have some private time with her. However, I spent about a half an hour in her classroom chatting and watching her teach and took notes afterwards. I was also able to visit the area in which Mary's school was situated. It was in the centre of a bleak housing estate in what was clearly a very poor part of the city. Mary did not seem in the least bit bothered by the ongoing assessment or the upcoming tests. She told me that it was all blown out of proportion really, and she was just "sort of carrying on as before!" She had implemented the National Curriculum as best she could, but it was clear that she had no great expectations for her students, and was not concerned at how the assessment results might affect her own professional image. She didn't expect her children to perform well, so even if they all only achieved Level 1, she didn't consider this to be a reflection on her as a teacher, but a reflection of how children from poor families generally perform in school. Mary, of all the teachers I met, seemed the most relaxed and least concerned. She worked with my friend who had introduced us, and from what I can gather, she had always managed to maintain a comfortable balance between her professional and personal life. Mary was planning an Easter vacation when all the other teachers I spoke to were planning to work on their tests.

Invading the Classroom

Many of the issues that Susan raised occurred again in my conversations with the other teachers in January and February of 1991. Using Susan's conversations as a reference point I will show how the working lives of teachers had become increasingly complex as the requirements of the Reform Act invaded their classrooms. The themes identified from the conversations are ticking the boxes, finding the time, the effects on teaching and learning, why teachers did the work, erosion of control, self esteem and government intentions.

Ticking the Boxes

The teachers who were assessing in January found themselves torn between their own vision of teaching, and that of a distant bureaucracy. What they seemed to be experiencing was a pedagogical schizophrenia. Teachers wanted to teach, but the government wanted results. The resolution sounded so easy. Teach, but record the results as you go along! Did the government have any idea what it was asking?

Doreen

Of the teachers I spoke to in January, Doreen was the most insistent that assessment and testing were a waste of time. However, Doreen had the benefit of hindsight. She had taken part in the pilots the previous year. When I asked her about how she felt the previous year she said:

> When I was doing it I didn't mind because the time had come and I just had to get on with it. I didn't mind that much, it was a change.

Yet, Doreen had also explained to me the measures she had taken to ensure that the testing took place as planned, even when it became clear to her that is was unworkable.

> What you had to do was, there were forms to fill out at the end of a segment for every child, so at the end of every day, just before this started you were planning. I was just reading them and planning the night before for hours to work out which child was doing which activity at which time,

> what the others would be doing, how I was going to fit in the listening and speaking, how I was going to fit in the reading, and how I was going to manage to get everybody settled and not wanting me all at the same time. So that took planning, you had to do that to the minutest details.

Sometimes assessment materials were unavailable.

> I would stay at school and do the photocopying because I couldn't do without. I used to go in at the weekend when it was quiet and photocopy all this work and then you had to set out all these sheets for every child. They were everywhere.

Doreen spent her entire Easter holiday in 1990 collecting the materials she needed to do the tests. Yet, when I asked her whether she thought it was worth it she replied:

> I still think it is a waste of time. 23 of those attainment targets are going to be based on teacher assessment. In the end, we've done all this work, hours and hours of work and there were no discrepancies.

Doreen was making reference to the fact that her own assessment of the children's abilities was no different from what they achieved on the tests.

So how was Doreen coping this year? Well, she was still planning and organizing, and worrying but this time, she was organizing the recording system and putting herself into training!

> Nobody gave me any idea at all of what I was supposed to do. So I thought this up and I'm going to find something where I can prepare myself beforehand. Somebody in school gave me one of these and said, "This could be useful". So this is what I did for everybody. This took me from September to Christmas to work out so I could get into the habit. It's a different way of doing it, but at least I practiced doing it. I went through every one.

Doreen was describing a recording system for her teacher assessment which seemed to consist mostly of marking of boxes in accordance with the prescribed attainment targets. She was training herself to be an expert "ticker". It was proof, at least, that her own assessment and recording could be accurately measured against the SATs results the following year.

Doreen had not suffered in silence the previous year. She believed that the complaints the teachers had made in 1990 had brought about a streamlining of the testing procedures in 1991.

> At the end . . . I had forms to fill in on how much time I had spent testing. I mean, these were really complicated. "How much time did you spend planning on it?" I mean there were hours and hours and hours. It was sectioned off you see. It was, "how much time did you spend in planning the day ahead?" "How much time did you spend photocopying?"

But even though Doreen's memory of the pilots was an unhappy one, she expressed some gratitude for having been put through this experience.

> I'm glad I had the experience, even though I complained last year. I understand, now, what has to be done.

Jane and Patricia

Jane, however, did not. Our conversation in her Patricia's kitchen one February night in 1991 often developed into an adhoc inservice session with Patricia explaining to both of us how the process was to work. Jane was convinced things would go wrong.

> This year's a try out so obviously we're going to get things wrong and we're not going to get things right. We are going to see if things work and if they don't we'll re-arrange things.

Patricia explained,

> Some of the Key Stage 1 teachers have not had training courses yet so they're panicking.

Jane's reaction to being left in ignorance was to read again and again the instructions she had received.

> Evenings are spent reading through this. You know, this is bedtime reading. You can't read it in school. You haven't got the time. You have

> to read it at home. There just isn't time in the day. Especially with infants. You don't get any free periods.

Worse still, Jane, when she did get free time, was having to spend it counting dinner money and balancing registers! She didn't feel, as a professional that she should spend her free time counting up ticks.

> I told them the last time. I'm not doing it again. It's ridiculous. From now on I'm just going to count up the ticks and even if it's wrong I'm just going to hand it in!

I did not draw Jane's attention to the irony of refusing to count ticks in a register for attendance but being willing to count ticks for assessment. Jane, however, commented on the nature of recording shortly afterwards.

> Well, I felt I must record. I mean, we've always recorded children's work. Not to the level that we have to do it now. It was always recorded. It was under a general report, really. We didn't have so many tick sheets to tick off. You know, it was why a child wasn't working or why a child wasn't reaching a certain standard. Maybe it had problems at home, maybe it had a speech problem . . . which you're really not supposed to mention now. No home background or speech problems are to be mentioned. You have to be ever so careful what you say.

Neither Jane, nor Patricia thought that the timetables provided for testing by SEAC were reasonable for 7 year olds.

> It doesn't take into account the time it takes to get these children organised. They're used to coming in and having a half an hour of time with the teacher whether it be your things, or what you're going to do today or a story - whatever. You know, they bring in their birthday presents to show and then you have a "happy birthday", whatever.

I mentioned that all the official instructions regarding the assessment and testing procedures stressed that they should be a part of the normal school day. Patricia replied that it was impossible. Jane continued,

> Well, if a child comes to you wanting help - you would not say, "Go away!" At that age their concentration span is short. Half an hour is a

> long time for them to have to sit and do work entirely on their own. Usually you have to mingle an awful lot and help children. Even when someone is over there fighting - which happens! Your hear this almighty noise and somebody's fighting. "He's got my rubber, Miss!" You know? You can't just say, "Carry on!"

I asked Jane when she was filling out the assessment boxes. She replied, "All year round!" When I asked her to describe the effect the new policy was having on her working life she became agitated:

> I came into teaching because I wanted to impart knowledge I suppose, to children. I wanted to teach children. I feel at the moment I'm not teaching. I feel as if I'm assessing constantly. It isn't the job it started out to be. You know, you don't have to be a teacher to assess all the time. You're not actually giving out knowledge. You're just trying to get whatever you can out of the children all of the time without actually teaching them anything. It's not a teaching situation anymore.

But even though Jane realized that the children were not being taught as effectively as in the past, she followed her instructions anyway. This conflict appeared to place her under some considerable stress.

> I think the effect on the teacher is mental, I suppose, rather than physical. I mean I think that you've lost the chat you had with the children, really. You just feel you are constantly assessing, although you are listening to the children, you're listening to what they're saying with respect to the attainment targets all the time. It's just that feeling all that time that there must be an attainment target there. You don't feel so relaxed. I mean, it's really made me tense and this must be realized by the children I would think. There's a tension there. You talk faster.

But despite her fears that the quality of her teaching was deteriorating, Jane was still prepared to defend the assessment process.

> I like the way they're organized. It's the pressure that's spoiling it in a way. Because I have to do all of this before March.

Did Jane think that next year would be better?

> No! I was saying to my husband last night, "And to think of it, I have to

> do this again next year!" I'll have more knowledge and it will be slightly better, but I'm still going to be constantly pressured!"

Patricia, however, was enthusiastic about both the National Curriculum and the assessment procedure.

> Well, I think it makes you realise that you're doing the right thing. You can work through things and you know where you're going. Following through the core subjects. You're following through the documents that you've got. You know exactly where you're going. You're marking against National criteria. You're not missing out great chunks. I like to plan so I've got all my planning - so I tick off - and I know what I've planned through the year. I cover it through the year.

Jane believed that the miscue analysis she was having to do with her readers was impossible but Patricia disputed this, pointing out that with practice Jane would get used to it. Jane replied. "I haven't got time to get used to it!"

Jane and Patricia had different objectives. Jane wanted to get on with the job of teaching, Patricia wanted to act as a facilitator in implementing the government's plans. She was an enthusiastic collaborator.

Susan

Susan had a pessimistic attitude towards the testing policy. When I asked her whether she thought standards were going to rise she replied,

> I think the ability to do tests will increase. Teachers will be teaching with tests in the back of their minds all the time. That will be a shadow hanging over them.

Like Jane and Doreen, Susan had worked at night and at the weekends to ensure that the assessments were completed. In response to a question about when she found time to do all the extra work involved in the National Curriculum and assessment she commented that the only time she had was at the weekends because in the evening she was too tired. She spent a great deal of time filling in boxes from her classroom records. Susan believed that it was inappropriate to test such young children and commented on the fact that their ability to concentrate and perform in the classroom was sometimes unpredictable. When children had to stay inside because of bad weather, for example, they tended to get restless and their work sometimes deteriorated.

Susan's concern for fairness was to be mirrored many times over when I came to talk to teachers in June. However, her comment about paper and pencil tests was disturbing. To what extent was Susan subscribing to a mode of testing she herself knew would show her students up in a poor light. This was Susan's dilemma. On the one hand she wanted to demonstrate student progress, on the other hand she was willing to have her students experience "failure" in the interests of fairness, expediency and reality. So her next comment on the testing was even more revealing. Rather than have her students do poorly on the tests, Susan was even prepared to train them, something she was not in the least happy about.

> Well, I've got to keep the National Curriculum in mind and I've got to be one step ahead of it and anticipate what's going to come up in it and the form it's going to take and make sure that I have presented the information in that form to my children before hand. Like the test about the poster. I mean, most of them would fail because they wouldn't know what it meant. But I will make sure that I have done these things so that they are familiar with the language and they will know what is required.

Susan was also prepared to train her students for the maths tests as her comments about practicing on dice indicated.

Susan had other experiences with testing and she was aware that there were significant differences between what she was doing now and what she had done in the past.

> Yes! I am teaching towards those targets.

Thus, Susan's concern that her children should produce their very best results in the upcoming tests had also caused her to change the way she taught in the classroom. Jane and Doreen also felt their teaching day had changed. I will return to this topic in the next section.

Most of the teachers I spoke to in the early part of 1991 were deeply concerned about the way the testing policies were being implemented, but all of them were busy assessing and planning for the testing in the Summer. They were mostly very busy, very tired and very worried about what was going to happen. Their teaching had also changed.

Finding the Time

I was talking with Jane in Patricia's kitchen. Jane was half way through her teacher assessment and she was feeling the pressure of having to finish it by March 31st. It was a Tuesday, Shrove Tuesday in fact, and she was telling me what her teaching day had been like. It upset her that she hadn't been able to take a day out to make pancakes - something she had always done at this time of the year. It was fun for the children, and she believed it had always been a worthwhile experience. But cooking wasn't on the list of things she had to assess. And it didn't fit into her science attainment targets for that term. She became quite distraught when she tried to explain how she felt and the words came tumbling out, rapidly, and with hardly a breath. She explained to me why pancakes had to go and described the escalating intensity of her working life.

> It would take me all day to do it with the class and I just can't - I should just feel it's a day gone - again. We missed Friday because there was no school - you know, a whole day out - and another day out when I'm on this course. You know, even to miss a DAY - and I think - I've had so many children ill - although in a way that's been quite easy - because I have been able to assess those who have been there. One time last week I only had nineteen children and that made a big difference - that made a big

> difference to the way I could assess, because even me only taking four out only left 15 children to sort of mingle and get on with their work and the level of quietness was down and it was much easier - and the ones being assessed weren't distracted - because sometimes I find they get distracted - you know - by what's going on around them. Depending on what it is. I AM finding it a problem.

Jane's mounting panic that the tasks at hand would not be completed in time overwhelmed her, even to the point of being glad that children were sick. She did not lose sight of the fact, however, that some important aspects of her teaching work were being discarded because of the more urgent necessity of completing her assessments. She was not alone in her almost obsessive concern about lack of time. Most of the teachers I spoke to in the early part of 1991 found pressure of time a constant irritant and in many cases this became a cause of escalating stress.

Apple (1989) has described the phenomenon experienced by Jane as *intensification*.

> Intensification "represents one of the most tangible ways in which work privileges of educational workers are eroded." It has many symptoms, from the trivial to the more complex - ranging from being allowed no time at all even to go to the bathroom, have a cup of coffee, or relax, to having a total absence of time to keep up with one's field. (p. 41)

Apple (1989) identified three features of intensification that lead to deteriorating work conditions:

1) excessive workload which intrudes into coffee breaks, lunch hours, home life and holidays.
2) Completing externally determined objectives dominates work activities.
3) Reduction in creative activity due to excessive administration of tests.

Apple (1989) also noted that teachers had become particular susceptible to the phenomenon of intensification because of the rapid growth of curricular systems which legislated goals, strategies, tests, textbooks, worksheets and appropriate student responses. Commenting on ethnographic studies of the labor process of teaching, he noted that in schools where teaching was heavily concentrated on forms of skill testing, the intensification of teacher work was quite visible. Teachers would spend large portions of time evaluating students and then spending significant amounts of time administering and recording the results.

> One also found teachers busy with these tasks before and after school and, very often, during their lunch hour. . . . Two hours' more work at home each night was not unusual, as well. (Apple, 1989, p.44)

Apple saw the debilitating features of intensification affecting both the teacher and the student.

> Getting done became the norm. There is so much to do that simply accomplishing what is specified requires nearly all one's efforts. 'The challenge of the work day (or week) was to accomplish the required number of objectives.' As one teacher put it, 'I just want to get this done. I don't have time to be creative or imaginative.' (p. 44)

I could not get Apple's words out of my mind when I listened to Jane's story.

> I find I'm assessing constantly now. Well, not constantly - but most of the time I feel as if I am assessing. I'm looking to see what attainment target is that. . . . If I'm doing an experiment with them I feel that I should sit back and find out what they know - instead of helping them. I'm expecting them to KNOW then - when I haven't actually taught them the experiment procedure! Well, I want to know what they know now instead of me going through them with it and helping them with it. It's the pressure.

Patricia, despite being generally in favor of the testing policy, felt strongly about the extra work it entailed.

> You can't possibly, (you) can't count the hours. I mean, you live the job. . . You sit in church wondering what you're going to do tomorrow.

And Jane agreed. Teachers were always in school early and left late. Worse still, even the time they were supposed to have for preparation evaporated - sometimes for the silliest of reasons.

> Half your lunch hour you are probably preparing. You usually spend a half an hour, twenty minutes in the staff room having your lunch. At break time you're always talking about the children . . . or called out . . . evenings are spent - very often spent reading through this (holding up National Curriculum document) - this is what I do - bed-time reading. . . . You can't read it in school because you haven't got the time.

The Effect on Teaching

Jane was finding her teaching day radically altered.

> I'm finding the spontaneity has gone out of it. You're thinking all the time of attainment target. What attainment target is this. You've lost the relaxation of it. Being relaxed with children. you're always thinking in your mind about the tests and the attainment targets - and I must do this - 31 to get through - and if a child brings something else to you - you think - can't do that today - haven't got time -I can't talk about that today - I've set this to do and we have to do this. And that's it . . . Before - I felt that I could go off the subject - if I planned something and something else turned up - that was far more interesting than what I had planned - then we could carry on and do that - but now I feel - No - I've done it - this is attainment target - what attainment target that would be I don't know - I can't do that.

Susan, working in a very different environment commented in January, on how different her day was compared with a couple of years before. All the teachers I spoke to felt their job had changed. Susan felt this stronger than anyone.

> I'm absolutely fed up with it. Most people of my age feel really they just want to get out of teaching. This isn't the job we came into - it isn't that we've always done.

Jane echoed those words

> I've lost the enjoyment I had I think. I mean, I still enjoy being a teacher. There are moments in the day when I really think, you know, maybe we've had a good day and the children have done well and they've achieved quite

> a lot and I think, "Oh, I really do enjoy this!" But those times are very few and far between. I feel at the moment that I'm not getting anywhere with this assessment and its taking far too long and I feel if it's going to be like this every year from now on . . .

Issues

The burning question I wanted to ask all of these teachers was, "Why did they do it?" There was a good reason for asking this question. At the end of January all the teachers unions had issued a union advice to teachers on the testing workload. Teachers were urged to consult with their Heads especially if the SATs proved unrealistic and to ask for help where necessary. Some teachers felt free to do this but many did not.

> *I can't say that I can't do it. That's my job. I shouldn't be in teaching if I can't do this.*

This was the reaction by Jane to the joint statement issued by the unions. How much control did they have of their classroom? How was their self esteem? What did they think the government was doing?

Loss of Control

Both Susan and Jane felt they were losing control of their classroom. Susan felt she was being watched all the time, even when there was no-one in the room.

> I think you went into your own class and you used to feel, this is your class. You could get on within reason and plan it as you wanted to and do what you liked. Now you cannot do that really because you feel you've got to give a certain amount for science, you've got to give a certain amount of time for speaking and listening skills, you've got to give a certain amount of time to writing. . . .

Jane also sensed a loss of control since assessment was introduced. She and Patricia discussed their differing views.

J I don't feel as if I've got any control. In a way I feel as if attainment targets are controlling me. Well, not the attainment targets really, but the pressure of assessment is controlling what I do in class at the moment. I'm completely geared towards attainment targets 1,2 and 3 in language you know. I think, "Is this a 1, a 2 or a 3?" What statements of attainment are there? You can't deviate from that.

I discussed this reaction with Jane. I mentioned that tests were things that didn't actually control anything. I was more interested in who was controlling Jane. Could she personalise this control.

J I suppose if you're talking about personally - It's Kenneth Baker! (the Secretary of State for Education when the Education Reform Act was being formulated)

R But he's not here now!

J So, whoever it is controlling me!

R But he's sitting there in his office. He doesn't care does he?

J I bet he's never been in a classroom.

P Well, it's our professionalism that is controlling us. Saying that we are responsible to colleagues, to ourselves.

R Well, that's what I want to find out. It can't be tests, it can't be Kenneth Clarke. (The Secretary of State for Education when the Education Reform Act was being implemented and the incumbent at the time of this study)

J Well, we are professionals. I want this class to do well on these tests!

R Why?

J Because it's a reflection on me! If they do very badly I'll think, "Oh, what have I done? I haven't taught them very well. I haven't done this and I haven't done that. I've only had this class since September for a start and obviously what went on the year before must have contributed but it doesn't matter. It'll be on the Year Two teacher. The results will be, "Oh, this teacher hasn't done very well."

Self Esteem

Susan, Jane and Doreen had all been teaching for many years. None, as far as I could tell were in danger of losing their jobs, yet all of them seemed to feel that poor marks on tests were a reflection of their teaching ability. The exception was Mary who worked in a school where children traditionally performed poorly. So low performance was the norm. This was to prove extremely interesting when Mary came to actually do the tests in June. However, in January, unlike the other teachers, she did not appear to be suffering any potential loss of self esteem.

I asked Susan about the teachers' contract which stipulated the number of hours she was supposed to work. Were the teachers working those hours?

> No, they are all doing a lot more! It seems to me . . . that the teachers . . . I really am amazed. I know we've lost our negotiation rights . . . but the more they're piled on the more they're prepared to do!

Jane had also mentioned this phenomenon. Why did she think that infants teachers were prepared to do so much?

> Well, they're aren't enough of us to get together really. And, you have all this personal relationship with the staff and the head. It's not him up there who hardly knows who you are. You see, our [union] secretary is with us in the staff room. They are not faceless people at the top or anything. In fact, if you've got a strong union person, and we have, things can get done.

Jane's final comment was in direct conflict with her own assessment of her teaching situation. Not only was nothing being done to help her, she wasn't prepared to ask for any help, even when she was in some considerable difficulty over the performance of her teaching duties.

Why did Susan think teachers were prepared to do anything that was asked of them?

> Partly from myself, because I feel responsible to a certain degree. I think, well, if a lot of these children come out low Level 2, is it a reflection on me? You know?

This comment surprised me. Susan had been teaching 17 years. Furthermore, Susan knew that her teaching environment was often outside of her control. When I asked her about the responsibility of education authorities and how they would react to poor test results she commented:

> I suppose the Director of Education . . . that lot up in the Education Office . . . I suppose it does reflect on them to some extent if Burston had the lowest scores.

But did Susan feel they were under as much pressure as her?

> Well, yes. It probably does reflect more on them. At the end of the day I could say, "Well, look. I've got excuses. The kids come in late. Absenteeism is very high. Falling asleep. Poor backgrounds. Often they haven't got the same help from home, the same environment. I can make a lot of excuses. I don't know what excuses they can make!

Susan, however, did not make excuses. Everything she was doing in the classroom centred around ensuring that her children did well.

Government Intentions

An intriguing feature of my early conversations was the teachers' reactions to government. Not everyone commented on what was happening to them in the early part of the year although everyone had something to say on the subject in the summer. Doreen was in her second year of testing. When I asked her what the point of all the testing was she said bluntly

> I think it is just to check up on the teachers. It's not to check up on the

> children at all.

Susan believed it was a question of control.

> Well, I think the government had decided to do this because a few years ago the teachers were taking action, right, over their salaries and conditions of service, and the government have fixed them like they've fixed every other group. I think part of this is fixing the teachers, actually. We've got no say about our conditions of service. We don't negotiate our salaries. We just have to do as we're told don't we? I mean, put the clock on and in ten years time the schools will be able to hire and fire and teachers will be able to negotiate their own salaries, won't they? Say, in good schools, if they really want you, you'll be able to go in and negotiate your own salary. I think that's they way it will go, don't you?

I asked Susan again why she was co-operating with the government when she clearly disagreed with what they were doing.

> Well, it's a job. That's why I'm there. It's a job. I'm not going any further in teaching. I just want to get out! I quite enjoy teaching. I quite enjoy working with young children. I quite like working in the area I'm working in. You know, the children are lovely. Got a lot of problems and nevertheless I don't mind that! But I think this is an extra pressure, having to asses them, you know, in these three core subjects. I don't think it's very fair to them. They haven't had the same chance as children in white areas, have they?

Susan, like all the teachers I spoke with, loved teaching. None of them really wanted to leave. But Susan, I think, summarised the mood in early 1991.

> Up until this National Curriculum came in you felt you were doing a good job. A job that needed to be done. A very demanding job. there's a lot of satisfaction in it. Whereas, now, you feel there's an awful lot of pressure in it.

That pressure was to get worse as the year wore on. I returned to Canada in the middle of February wondering how my teachers were going to survive the next few months.

Chapter 5

Teachers' Conversations in June and July, 1991

This chapter documents the conversations with 13 teachers held in June and July of 1991. The focus of the conversations was to continue to explore teachers' experiences in relation to the research questions and specifically their reactions to the testing process which had just been completed. First the new participants are introduced and then the themes both new and recurring are explored. These were the workload and its effects, the experience of administering the SATs and their views of the National Curriculum. Issues examined were power and control, professionalism and the unions.

Introducing the Participants

I returned to Britain at the beginning of June. By that time I had arranged interviews with thirteen teachers. Jane and Patricia, Doreen, Susan and Mary and I were to meet again. As well, I was going to speak with a new group of teachers.

Anne and Sophie

The school Ann and Sophie worked in was in Aylesbury in the South East of England. It was one of those schools Doreen and Susan had described as "middle class". I was not able to visit the school. Neither Ann nor Sophie liked their Head teacher and said he would probably not agree to me coming. I had met Ann on a sailing trip. This was only her third year of teaching. Sophie, on the other hand, had taught for nine years some of which were spent in Africa. She was pregnant and was not returning to the school in September.

Wendy and Elaine

Wendy and Elaine taught in a school in Humberside located in the centre of sprawling low-income housing estate. The school, however, was fairly new and well equipped. Wendy had returned the previous September from St. Albert, Alberta, where she had been working as a Commonwealth Exchange teacher. I had met her through her exchange teacher who was an old friend of mine. I had not met Elaine before the interview the interview in June.

Barbara

I had worked with Barbara for nine months in 1989 prior to my return to Canada. Like Ann, she was in her third year of teaching but she had taken an unpaid leave for the last six months of 1990 in order to travel. She returned to her post in January, 1991 but did not find out about the assessment and testing until February. From that point on she appeared to be struggling to keep up with the work. I thought she looked tired and frazzled. Barbara's school was located in an authority comprising more than one hundred ethnic groups. There were relatively few white children in the school and these tended to come from low-income families.

Pamela

Pamela replied to my NAS/UWT advertisement. She had been teaching for almost twenty years. Pamela had been asked to take over a Year Two class at Christmas because the class teacher had resigned saying she couldn't cope with all the extra work. The authority had advertised for a replacement but had not had a single applicant! Pamela refused to take on the job full-time and persuaded the authority to allow her to job share with a friend. Originally I was going to interview both teachers but at the last minute Pamela's friend was unable to come. However, Pamela gave an illuminating account of how the part-time post eventually became an unpaid full-time post despite her best efforts to stay away when she wasn't being paid. Pamela's school was in an authority that prided itself on its high academic standards. It was located on the southern perimeter of Greater London and was generally considered to be a 'desirable' neighborhood.

Angela

Angela lived in Southend, a London commuter town on the north bank of the Thames Estuary. She taught in a fairly new infants school of around 200 children. She had been teaching 23 years and, like Susan, had some very strong opinions about the way her teaching had been affected by the teaching and assessment process. She was also extremely sceptical about the way schools were being administered and the assessments being implemented. So incensed had been the teachers in her school, they invited the local Member of Parliament to come and see what they were doing.

Jenny

My last interview took place the day after I had attended a conference of Key Stage One teachers in Birmingham organised by the NAS/UWT. Jenny and her husband were strong supporters of their union. However, this did not prevent Jenny's husband from complaining about the amount of work Jenny was prepared to take on. Jenny was also a very experienced teacher and she worked in a school which was defined by the authority as a social priority area. At one time teachers were awarded extra money for working in these areas. The special allowances were no longer offered, but the teachers who had received them did not have them removed. Jenny was still receiving her allowance. The school was located in what is know in England as a "New Town". These were towns built in the fifties and sixties in various parts of the country to alleviate the housing problems of large cities. I was not able to visit Jenny's school, but I did visit Telford, the town in which it was located. It appeared to be a sprawling housing estate surrounded by industrial parks. However, it is located just off a number of important motorways and there is fairly easy access both to the countryside and large cities.

The Workload and its Effect

Well, this thing has invaded my life completely.

Susan, 19th June, 1991

My conversations with teachers in the early part of 1991 had revealed a number of recurring issues. The amount of time preparing and adminstering assessments was a constant worry. There is little doubt that both the assessment and testing which took place between September 1990 and June 1991 was hugely time consuming. How much, and in what ways, this affected the teachers I spoke to depended on a number of factors which were identified during our conversations.

Time for the Assessment

I already knew from my previous visit that the assessment process which had to be completed by March 31st was especially onerous. However, in January and February it had not yet been completed, so I was interested in knowing how the teachers had coped with the time constraints imposed upon them. In most cases, the responses were the same. The recording task was onerous and time consuming.

Jane and Patricia

Jane and Patricia had both mentioned in January how they sat in Church Mass on Sundays worrying about their work. In June, Jane described again how she did her assessment recording.

> I don't like taking a lot of work home. I've got three children at home and there's always people there, so there's no way I can work at home. I'd rather go to school for two hours on a Saturday or a Sunday and work quietly at school. That's where all my stuff is anyway. I chose to do that. But I would have had to do that at home.

I asked Jane if she could have conceivably done this during the allocated school time.

> No! We don't get any free time in primary schools.

I raised the issue of the contractual hours teacher were expected to work. Jane replied:

> Well, teachers can't do it in that time!

The governors of Patricia's school had requested information on how much time the assessment had taken and she had analysed it.

> Up until recently it was 28 hours extra. Over the top.

This apparently was since January. Jane explained:

> I came in one Saturday. Two hours on a Saturday. I did half of them then, and two hours on a Sunday after church. I go to the Catholic church. I just used to pop up afterwards (to the school) and four hours that took me for each child. And we did it you see. By March 31st. But it didn't go anywhere. It just stayed in our file.

Now March 31st actually fell during the teachers' Easter break. Patricia said it was chosen because it was the mid-point of the term. So what did Jane feel about her Easter holiday?

> I think they make sure it's before the holidays then you can do all the work up until then and the week of your holiday you can fill in the results. . . . I

> didn't go away. That's what I did. In fact, I came into school to do that because I find it better to come into school . . . I didn't do much the week before because I had filled in all my teacher assessment because I thought, "Well, I've done that. I'm going to have a week!" Then we had Easter on the Monday, then, on the Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday of the week before we were due back to school I came into school and went through all the documents thoroughly and worked out my timetable and got organized. And kept reading. There was an awful lot to read through.

Jane was married with three children. What would she have done if her husband had insisted that they take a holiday?

> There is no way I could have been back on that Monday without having prepared all that work!

Doreen

Doreen had been part of the pilot study last year, so she was fairly familiar with the system. However, she was also extremely well organized. How much extra work did she put in?

> It wasn't difficult at all, but only because I had a supply in my class for four days. . . . She took the class and I filled the forms in! It didn't take me four days. Just two and a half. I used the other one and half for planning.

Doreen had already organised her own recording system. Did this help? After all, she had 32 children to assess by March 31st and I had calculated that she would have had to place about 80 marks on her sheets for each child. Was this a problem? Each of those little ticks represented an assessment of some kind!

> Yes! But it's no problem recording it, just the time.

How had Doreen fitted the extra work into the 'normal' school day?

> I didn't do the recording in the classroom. From half past eight until four o'clock I went into the medical room in school and I shut myself off and from my records and my knowledge of the children I decided what level they were . . . I would have preferred to do it during the day but we hadn't actually formulated a method for assessment. Next year I have 38 children

> so this summer holiday I told the other two members of staff that we're going to sit down and I'm going to make . . . we're waiting for someone to bring out a record sheet . . . I don't want boxes, I don't want something like this (pointing to the sheets she is filling in) I want statements of attainment for science levels 1, 2 and 3 so that I can see it. I'm going to do it myself, because obviously no-one else is going to do it.

Wendy and Elaine

Wendy and Elaine were supposed to keep a log of the extra hours worked between January and March but, as they said, "It didn't get done. We were too busy!" I wanted to know who had asked them to keep the log and they replied, "Them!" Who is "them"? I replied. "Them!", they said, "Humberside". A supply was provided to help them during the assessment period, but they didn't, like Doreen, use her to teach whilst they filled out records. "We never thought of it! We did it all at home in the evenings and at weekends!" After the assessment was over, Wendy and Elaine did sit down and work out the extra hours including the meetings they had between themselves to plan the assessment. Elaine thought that it averaged out at around an extra ten hours a week although some weekends were busier than others.

> We should have kept a log, we know we should, but if only they had given us the thing and said, "Here, write it down. For every day." That would have made my life ever so much easier! I wasn't entirely sure what they meant and I was too busy and too tired to sit down and figure out what they were getting at and then of course I felt guilty about it all the time as well.

Wendy and Elaine were also dismayed by the fact that they had laboured to complete their assessment by March 31st only to discover that no-one was interested in seeing them.

> We filled in all these forms and then we sat back and said, "Great!" But I couldn't believe it, because then nobody wanted to know.

This was particularly distressing, because some of their assessment time had been lost due to the appearance of a government inspector in February. These are a rare occurrence and the reports are public, so schools, who have had advanced notice of the event, usually put their best foot forward. Wendy and Elaine had the additional problem of producing results despite a government inspection.

> That's why our assessment was delayed. They were so worried about the inspection that we couldn't really worry about the assessment, well, until after the February half term.

Barbara

Barbara was in much the same boat but for a different reason. As I have already explained, she had returned from a leave of absence and no-one mentioned to her the need for assessment until the beginning of February. What information was available to Barbara when she got back?

> None at all. No one set about telling me what to do. Four weeks into the term I realised that I was supposed to be assessing them myself. It just sort of cropped up with Sylvia. She said, "How are you getting on? Have you made any assessments yet?" I said, "No! Not formal assessments. I'm finding out where they are." And she said, "You do realise that at the end of the term you are going to write down where they are on this great long list of attainment targets!" Which was impossible. Not only had I only had them for three weeks, there was no record of what they had done with the supply teacher who had them for a whole term but he hadn't recorded what they had covered.

But Barbara did get them done!

> But they were very sketchy. I pulled figures out of the air in a lot of cases . . . I mean, the basic things like literacy and maths, I could easily find out what they knew, but for the science, it's impossible to know how much they know in all those subjects.

So did Barbara just guess in the end?

Yes!

Pamela

Pamela and her friend were asked to take over a class after Christmas, but they refused to do it alone and ended up job sharing. However, the assessment created extra work. How much extra?

> Another one and a half days a week when we weren't actually involved in them, during the teaching assessment stage. Looking at what they had done, especially in the English. The English took an awfully long time to decide on where we thought the children were.

Pamela and her partner also had problems getting through the science attainment targets. In fact, they never finished them and were asked by their advisor to lie on their recording sheets. They also doubted other teachers' honesty, given the short space of time allocated to the assessment process.

> I think other people would have been under pressure and certainly I don't know that everybody necessarily applied themselves with the same vigour to all of these attainment targets given that there was a very short period of time in which to do it and there was a lot of disorganization and stuff like that, you know?

The time Pamela and her partner spent on recording was compounded by confusion over the system they were to use.

> We were given a sheet first of all, just after January, which we then recorded on. And that was then done away with. It was nothing like the second sheet we had to do the teacher assessment on . . . so we had to do it twice in effect. The first one was totally irrelevant because it bore no relation to the SEAC one.

Jenny

Jenny and her husband were both heavily involved in the work of their teachers' union. There had been a great deal of discussion in their home about the extra work load of teacher assessment and testing. Jenny's husband was constantly reminding her that as a union teacher she should follow her union's advice and only do that which was reasonable. Jenny found this difficult because, as she explained to me, the testing would not have happened otherwise and this would have created difficulties for her. Teachers had to do an awful lot of work over and above the "call of duty" throughout the year, and this was usually done in their own time.

> All our planning is done in our own time. Each holiday before we are going to do our topic. It takes a long time. . . . I'd prefer it if we had some time in school, but in an infants school it's very difficult. Non-contact time has been a thorny issue for a long time.

Time for Testing

If assessment and recording consumed teacher's time before Easter, testing consumed children's time in an unprecedented way afterwards. Up to six weeks of the summer term were devoted to testing. Despite government claims that it could all be conducted during the normal school day, teachers found the reality to be quite different.

Jane and Patricia

Jane and Patricia, like most of the teachers I spoke to, found the tests all took longer than anticipated. One of the tests required children to produce a maths game. This took its toll on some teachers including Jane despite the fact that she had taken the trouble to speak to two teachers who had already done it before she did it herself.

> You could have spent all day trying to extract that from the child. Maybe they would have got it in the end but you just couldn't spare the time. According to the teacher's document it said something like forty or sixty minutes, but it took all afternoon for a child to do a game. By the time

> they got out the equipment, by the time they decided what they were going to do. That took a long time, them discussing it. Then they wanted to get all the equipment. Then they wanted to make quite elaborate games. The games they made were really quite good, but they wanted to make them very elaborate, and wanted scissors and glue. The children didn't know, you see, that they were being assessed . . . so you couldn't really stop them.

Jane also had problems working in the suggested groups of four and chose, in fact not to do this, which meant extra time added to the task as well.

> You've got to talk to those two and try and get out of them what the game was about. And then you have to try and find out who had the idea and who didn't, you know? Who was the leader, and was this child just following? You can actually find that out quite well. And there are a lot of questions you had to ask them about the game and that takes, that's two children, and that's one afternoon . . . and then, if they could do it, you were supposed to test them for Level 3. (Which, as Patricia mentioned later was, "Inviting a more open response!")

Jane sounded as if she had been under quite a lot of pressure!

> When it came to that I did. It was going quite smoothly up until then but after that I couldn't stick to my timetable. My timetable had gone to pot.

The government had given teachers a plan to follow. What did Jane think of it?

> They gave an example of how to do it with 28 children, which I followed slightly. I didn't want to do much testing in the afternoon. I feel the children are better in the morning. It was unavoidable. I did have to do some testing in the afternoon, but I tried to do the bulk of it in the morning. But after the game, I was doing it all afternoon and at all sorts of times. At one point I had five groups doing a game at once because I thought, "I'm never going to get through them all." I had 29 children. I had five of them making a game one afternoon and it was absolutely chaotic.

Mary

Mary had been fairly unconcerned about the tests when I saw her earlier in the year. But this was partly because she had no idea really what was involved. As I mentioned, Mary went away for her Easter holiday. She was the only teacher I spoke to who did this. So how did she cope?

> We went to Switzerland for a week. . . . But I tell you, after, it drained me terribly. I couldn't believe it was possible to feel so drained. In our area we all work hard. All teachers work hard. But I did not feel I could be so drained after administering these tests. It took me 6 weeks with 20 children. . . . I'd read my book over the second week of the holiday and then bells started to ring, finally. And I coped. And I'm not saying I couldn't.

Doreen

Doreen was a highly conscientious teacher so it didn't surprise me when she told me that she had read through the instructions booklets many times before she started the tests. However, although she didn't go away for Easter, she told me she did very little school work because she had been preparing for this for some time. She had also done much more extensive pilots the previous year.

> I did about an hour a day. I got them into groups. Because I got them in four groups and they had recommended that you get them in groups of four to do these activities. So I grouped them. I did this in the Easter holidays, this sort of thing. . . . I decided myself to start on the maths . . . for no particular reason. Reading was done in snatches whenever I could find five minutes during assembly time. Science, well I thought the maths would be easier. I didn't want to start the writing right away. I wanted to prepare them slowly. So I thought I would leave science to the end. I did an hour a day for five weeks. Sometimes it was a couple of hours.

This was all explained to me calmly. Although Doreen disliked the tests, she appeared to have had very little difficulty administering them. Was this because of her prior experience? She didn't say.

Wendy and Elaine

Easter was an unhappy time for Wendy and Elaine. Neither of them took a holiday. Given that other teachers had told me they usually worked during their holidays, I wanted to know if this Easter had been worse than normal.

> Well, it was! It was hanging over us. We spent a whole morning discussing what we were going to do. It wasn't so bad for me because I didn't have so many to test as Elaine, but it was hanging over us. You couldn't put it out of your mind. . . . There was lots of reading. You just couldn't just read through it once and know it. You had to read and read and read.

It seemed to me that some teachers had spent all year reading about tests!

Barbara

Barbara was under pressure because she had a lot of catching up to do. So how much time did her testing take?

> I did go away for the Easter holidays. But I did an awful lot of work as well. Since February I've been doing about twice as much as I would normally do. In the evenings. Most evenings.

Barbara also raised an issue mentioned by most of the teachers. She was only given the SATs to look at on March 11th. So she had from March 11th to the end of the Easter holidays (April 15th) to organize the SATs. Barbara expressed a common view about this.

> It's ridiculous, isn't it! It puts you in a complete panic. I was in a panic.

Nevertheless, despite her panic, Barbara completed all her tests. However, she also had problems with the maths game, although the children liked doing it.

> I didn't, in fact, have time to finish that. I guessed the results of that one as well! I don't know how many times you were supposed to play it through and check the results. I think it would have taken about five hours with each group if I had actually done it the way they said.

Barbara's testing took 5 weeks with half the class. She had a split grade, so the other half were supposedly doing regular classroom work.

Pamela

Pamela and her partner were only testing twelve children. But this didn't prevent the tests from consuming their lives. Part of the problem was the job share. Each teacher wanted to make sure they were testing the same way as the other, so they were always popping in and out of school.

> We were in and out and in and out and in and out of each others' lives. One would go in the morning and then come back at lunch time and see how something had gone.

Pamela was supposed to be doing only two and half days a week, but in fact during the SATs this didn't happen. They tried to write down how much time they had spent but they couldn't quantify it.

> It was like doing a full week. Not that we were involved with the children, but we were involved with meeting each other, because what was paramount in our minds was that it should be fair for everybody and that if one group experienced it one way, then the other group would experience it the same way.

The maths game also proved a thorny issue with them.

> It was long. It could take forever if you allowed it to. You had to change it and be realistic about it. We altered it in effect
> . . . we tried it the once and found half way through what was going to occur . . . and we changed it.

Susan

Susan had her own strategies for ensuring that the work got done, but it didn't stop her from spending Easter worrying about the SATs.

> I found I had to keep looking in the book to check things. But I spent that

> night and the following night and every spare minute checking into it and all the holidays. . . . I sat up there (her office at home) for a week and planned it all and thought, now, I've finished it. That was the end of it. But, then, you've got to go through all the hoops and do the testing, haven't you? . . . This thing has invaded my life completely. As you know, I don't have young children, but I was just thinking, if this thing had happened about ten years ago when I had three young children and a house to run and other things to worry about and parents still alive and all that. . . . as it was, I could sort of cope with it, but it did take an awful lot of time.

Susan had a different problem from the other teachers that I worked with because many of her children had very little English. This added to the time it took to administer the tests.

> In a school like hours it takes ages to test some of the children, because of their English. You know, you've really got to search and find out if they do know it or not.

Worse still, Susan had to spend several afternoons just trying to track the set books down! When it came to the reading test though, Susan had her own solution. She did them before Easter instead of waiting until April 15th.

> To tell you the truth, I had done quite a bit before the holiday . . . . Some could be done before and I filled them in . . . the reading tests. They're not going to go back in that, the reading, the alphabetical order. At the training day we were told to keep a story once a week for five weeks and choose the best. Well, I thought, I have a batch in the cupboard and I'll bang a date on and use those in case I'm stuck. Right?

As it turned out Susan didn't have any trouble with the maths game, mainly because she had done this before and the children were used to it. And, she had that done before Easter too.

> This is something I have always done with them. I didn't know it was coming up, but I've done it with every class I've ever had. You know, you give them a 1 inch paper and they design their own game that keeps them occupied for an hour.

The floating and sinking test, which was to cause so much grief during this testing period was what consumed Susan's time. Apart from the fact that the fruit got mauled and often went rotten, the test took on a life of its own.

> Attainment target 1 was given an hour. I set the rest up. They had to copy a page our of their reading book in their best handwriting. You know, rewards for those who kept quiet and kept their heads down, right? And I set it up and explained it and we just finished the Level Two test and it was time to go on to Level Three and it was time to go to assembly. My God, I had to drop it and then come back again and carry on. You see, some of the children took 40 minutes. Some took and hour and a quarter.

Susan was always reluctant to press the children on these tests.

> You can only push kids so far, can't you. There's only so many hours in the day and only so much you can teach!

Jenny

Like all the teachers except Doreen, Jenny and her partner were constantly worried that their testing schedule would fall apart. Pressure to finish was always on teachers' minds. Jenny, however, identified one particularly frustrating aspect of this testing process, the help that was made available. I am going to examine that in some detail in the next section. Here is Jenny's somewhat cynical observation regarding the help line that her authority set up!

> We were given two dates when people would be at the local teacher centre where if we felt we needed help we could go. They were actually during the SATs. SATs had been going for a couple of weeks. But that wasn't what we needed because you couldn't go to those and say, "Give me more time!" I thought of them more as counselling sessions really. I didn't go to any, but I thought they would be counselling sessions where you would go and they would sort of pat you on the head and say, "I'm sure you're really coping and don't take it out of proportion."

But the teachers I worked with understood the beast they were dealing with, including its ever expanding proportions. This does not seem to have been the case with some administrators, advisors and moderators who were sometimes insensitive to the demands made on the teachers. The help teachers received before and during the tests varied considerably. In the case of the tests themselves any myths the government might have been perpetrating regarding the ability of teachers to administer them unaided in the course of the normal school day were soundly laid to rest!

Help

Teachers received help during the 1991 testing period in a number of ways. Firstly they were supposed to receive some sort of training. Secondly, they received help from advisors, moderators and administrators. They also received detailed instructions from the DES. They were to be given classroom resources such as books for the reading tests and equipment for the science and maths teests. A number of teachers received help inside the classroom during the administration of the SATs.

Training

Doreen was the repeat performer so I was interested in knowing what she thought of the training she received for the 1991 SATs. She told me that no-one had come to see her and that she had not been given any advice. Here's how she described her help.

> The teachers' books came and the handbook and I read that. Everybody did. And all the packets and the SATs. We then had four meetings. A total waste of time. In fact, I nearly walked out of some of them because all we did was re-iterate what was already in the book. They did it the other way round. What they should have done was have the meeting first, or, have the meeting first and introduce the book at the same time. Not give you all the information and then tell you what was in the book. You all sat around for hours listening to what you had already read! . . . During the one day session, it was sort of nine o'clock to half past three, by dinner time I really had enough. Most people had and they didn't come back. But

> they did have a video which was quite a good video actually and some information which they kept until three o'clock and that's when I got the forms and you had to wait for them. So there was no way that I could have walked out.

Wendy and Elaine had a similar experience. Although they were desperate for some help with the English SATs they didn't get any. And the training sessions were even worse than Doreen's.

> The first one was useless because we arrived and they said we don't know the answers. All they kept saying was, "We don't know the answers!" and it was a complete waste of time.

Sophie had gone on a National Curriculum Training day and found that useful.

But Ann and Sophie had no training sessions for the SATs.

> We had a day when all the staff went. . . . and we went to a meeting. But I didn't go on any specific courses for how to implement the SATs. I had no advice as to how to do it. It was totally me reading the book without any backup from my Head. He came and gave me the book and I said, "What's it like, John?" and he said, "I don't know, I haven't read it!"

If Ann and Sophie had not been given a course, what did the other teachers know?

> They knew nothing until that training day. They had a day for the whole school. I'd been, like, saying what we had got to do. There was almost a rift developed, because they hadn't got the pressure and they didn't really take it on board. Then, they went on this course, and they went through what we would have to do and then everybody in the school came and said, "We've got to get some support for you!" So that was good.

Of all the teachers faced with the prospect of testing, Barbara was in the worst situation because she had hardly read anything and hadn't been given anything. So her training sessions, held in the second half of the term of before Easter were crucial to her survival. What were they like?

> They were good in what they did, but you just felt that they didn't cover everything in enough detail. There was not enough time to inform you of everything you needed to do. . . . I had one training day after we got the SAT pack . . . it's ridiculous, isn't it!

At least Barbara had the documents to read. Pamela was not so lucky. When I asked her how her training sessions went she said:

> During the Christmas holidays we had our first INSET day to talk about the SATs and teacher assessment. That was a total disaster. The people who arranged it hadn't got any of the documents they needed to show us. . . . It was a wasted day. And we made our feelings known. Well, we met in cluster groups. We did meet once together as a whole. To minimize complaints I think they clustered us. I'm being cynical but I think it was easier for them to have us in cluster groups. . . . We broke down into groups of six.

Pamela only met with all the other teachers in her district once before the testing began.

> We all met at the beginning of the Easter holidays for the first and last time before we went back to do the SATs. . . . There was one man in charge of the system, Peter M. He was a secondary teacher. He was a very nice man whose attitude was, "If you can't do it, make it up!"

Susan's training sessions consisted of filling in the right boxes. And, of course, it was a twilight session. She had gone to learn how to do the miscuing analysis for the reading tests. Remember, Susan had ignored the instructions over time-tabling of the tests.

> I had to go on this twilight session and sit there, and they gave you a tape record and you had to sit there filling in boxes. I mean, that is an appalling waste of time after a day's work in school. I read the books and understood them the first time around. They're not terribly difficult to comprehend. Now, I had to sit in this hall for a couple of hours listening to . . . and it was so silly, because I had tested mine already! . . . But, even if you hadn't, I still would have been able to do it. And you have a printed sheet and the instructions are really specific.

Angela was not surprised at how bad her training sessions were. She had been force fed training for years and wasn't too impressed with it. After 23 years teaching, Angela was deeply skeptical of "experts". So it was hardly surprising that she became angry when her SATs training consisted of learning how to add up her students marks correctly.

> We had one day about the SATs and they spent most of the time telling us how to total up. But nobody had the SATs when we went in so it was a waste of time. . . . We went to one of the first ones and then we heard that they kept changing their minds and that they told the next lot something different and the next lot something different again.

I was curious about this. What was Angela's explanation?

> Presumably the government kept changing its mind or they kept getting bits of information. Teachers at the meetings were really quite angry about it and the advisors were definitely on the defensive.

Jenny had seen a training video the previous year. She was critical of its contents.

> Last year, on one of our Baker Days we had a video which had been produced. We were supposed to learn from this video what sorts of evidence we should be looking for. . . . It seemed a bit of a set up job. We found it a bit trite. . . . I don't think they acted like natural teachers. . . . There were so many times we could say "That's not possible! Where's the rest of the children while she's on her hands and knees on the floor discussing a year's work with one child?"

However, Jenny thought her SATs training was useful. She was the only teacher I spoke to who seemed satisfied with it.

> The training days were very good. They took us through all the SATs and said we had an opportunity to do a workshop. We had an opportunity to work each one, and then to decide. It was very, very good. Very well organized. And we were able to select what we wanted to do.

This was quite a contrast to the comment Pamela made about her training days and the moderators who organised them.

> Where the problem lay was with the moderators and we said this at the

> meeting when we were all together. None of them, in effect, was prepared to get their hands dirty . . . to organize actual activities, the science activities, so that we could all take part in them and see what would happen. Now, none of them was prepared to buy in all the little items that were needed and actually set it up. They merely talked about it in a hypothetical way.

I was curious to know whether Pamela had complained.

> Oh yes. They said, well, we just wanted you to talk about it in your groups and see if you can think of any problems that might arise.

In actual fact Pamela was given some hands on experience: some training for a maths SAT.

> We were given one activity, which wasn't really. It was one of the maths activities. The one where you have to have counters to invent a game. Except, they didn't have any counters for us. It made it rather difficult for us. But we were asked to talk that through and we were given roles within our group.

The role that advisors and moderators played during the testing season varied amongst the groups of teachers in the study. Overall, they were unhappy with the advice they got, though there were exceptions. Administrators came constantly under attack for a variety of reasons. The main problem appears to have been either disinterest or distaste for the task at hand. But ignoring the problems of their teachers just compounded the stress.

Help from Advisors and Moderators

Patricia was a trainer herself, though she said she never had enough time to do the job properly. She was allocated a small amount of time to help the testers, but she also had to look after her own classroom. In the pecking order of trainers she was at the bottom end: A part time seconded position with no extra pay. Patricia gave Jane a lot of help because they were friends. But Jane also received help from a moderator who was an authority advisor as well. Patricia was responsible for ten teachers, but Jane's moderator only had responsibility for six. Jane thought she was quite good, but Patricia wasn't very impressed. I asked if the moderator was under any pressure.

> Less than us. They just wafted and said, "Oh, what are you doing? Lovely dear!" They visited everyone but they just drifted in and out.

Jane, however, wanted to assure me that her advisor knew what he was doing.

> But I also hear that Bill Matthews had obviously read everything very thoroughly because the meeting we had with him, he knew everything we asked him. He was one of the senior advisors. But our advisor couldn't answer half the questions people asked her. She obviously hadn't even read the books. But Bill knew it inside out.

Patricia explained that Bill was a senior advisor whereas Jane's advisor was a step above Patricia. She was known as a "key" moderator. Unfortunately, she couldn't unlock the mystery of the tests for the teachers she was advising. Patricia also attended a training session herself

> There was an English input in the afternoon. The English person on the advisory team spoke about the SATs and got it wrong. Now, I stormed up to her and said, "Sorry, but you've got this wrong! You haven't read it. This is what it is. And she said, "Oh, Yes! Oh, Yes! Perhaps that's right. Oh, Yes!" But she was standing there giving information to Year 2 teachers who were doing SATs which was incorrect.

Jane explained that there were an awful lot of advisors involved in the testing. There was a team of advisors for English, maths and science. Some were teachers and some were full-time advisors. However, that was not the case elsewhere.

Mary appeared to have no help at all. No-one came to see her and no-one explained what she had to do.

> This was the whole trouble you see. Quite honestly. We've had our results and there's probably going to be . . . there's a lot of discrepancy. For modification. . . . One class in our school has got 38 results different from the teacher assessment and the other class has got 52. For moderation, you see. It says, '*for moderation*' on some of them.

Didn't Mary have anyone come and watch her while she was doing the SATs?

> No one came. Unfortunately we didn't have one person. And I coped. And I'm not saying I couldn't because following the teachers' book was . . . but again, I noticed that I had to read the teachers' book plus the assessment book because there were discrepancies. What level you assessed them at was slightly different in the assessment book from the teachers' book and this caused a bit of friction.

But if Mary had noticed a discrepancy who should she have gone to?

> I went immediately to the teacher next door! And then we got a 'link' teacher, you see. Supposedly. We knew there was a name on a paper. . . . She's a head teacher. . . . but to be fair. She is a teaching head. But I knew there was somebody at the end of the line. The people I blame are the advisors. And I say this quite honestly. Knowing our area. We had 40 children doing the tests between the two classes I felt that someone could have picked up the phone or someone could have come to inquire. Because there were plenty of people released to do this sort of thing. They were working hard enough and they were quick enough calling us to meetings - after school meetings - to tell us what was coming in this box and all of this. (Mary meant the box with the SATs and instructions in it. But she didn't see this until just before Easter because her Head kept it under lock and key!). And they kept saying, "Well, we will be coming into you, and you can expect us." But we haven't had any. It will be very interesting to see whether they will come in to moderate. I think this will be very interesting.

Doreen didn't see an advisor either and no-one came to see her while she was doing the tests. Wendy and Elaine were given a number they could ring ring if they needed help, but chose not to. Neither were they very keen on meeting other teachers who were doing the tests.

> It might have been useful, but it might have been counterproductive. You might have had a discussion and then gone away thinking you'd got it all

> wrong. The guidelines aren't sufficiently rigid for anyone to say "Ah, but! You really must do it this way." So whilst there were times when I would have liked to know how other people were tackling it, it might have also felt I was the only one in step.

I asked Wendy and Elaine how they would have felt about being watched by one of the advisors during the tests. Elaine commented

> I probably would have apologised in 16 different positions if I'd been in one sort of mood. If I'd been in another kind of mood, I would have said, "Who says? Who do you think you are?" It would just depend on how I was feeling on the day.

In fact, Wendy and Elaine had a very low opinion of their moderator.

> Our moderator thinks it's all wonderful. We think he's on SEAC's payroll. . . . It's just that he's a silly little man. . . . He came to see us at the end of the SATs and he really put our backs up. He was implying that he had been to other schools and we thought that everything was a complete and utter waste of time and he was implying that all the other schools he had visited had all been wonderful and nobody had really suffered. Well, we got really mad at him, didn't we? . . . His attitude was so holier than thou. I thought, "Surely teachers can't have . . . ." Well we knew how we felt about it. We knew from speaking to other teachers how they had felt about it. But he was painting such a rosy picture about it all. Because I think he wants to be doing it again next year and so he's hoping they don't abandon the testing. And I said, "I don't suppose there's been any school that had done the tests the way they were supposed to be done in a normal classroom situation." And he came out with this remark about teachers who **had** done it in the normal classroom situation and I said, "I bet they didn't finish them!" "Oh, but they did!" You know. Of course, he wasn't a Year 2 teacher. He was being positive and I know you have to be positive but he was just too much wasn't he?

I asked Wendy and Elaine whether he had been of any help at all.

> No! If we had questions to ask him he didn't know the answers . . . . He was quite vague about some things.

Barbara needed more help than most. She had much the same feelings as Wendy and Elaine, although she made these comments in response to a question about what it meant to be a professional.

> I think it's something to do with having more time with other people in the same situation and really being honest about things instead of going along to INSET courses where the tutors praise you to the hilt and say you're doing a wonderful job and we love you for what you are doing and all that stuff, when what you really want is to talk with other people and get some way around it or say, "Look, we're not going to do more than this amount of work." So, you have the feeling, then, that everybody's the same. I think I was in a situation where I felt that everyone else was really getting to grips with it, and I was getting left behind.

During the SATs Barbara's science advisor sat and watched her doing the tests. She saw this as an affirmation that she was on the right track. Unfortunately, Jenny had a quite different experience. Her moderator was also the primary advisor and in that capacity she had undertaken an official inspection of the school just before Easter.

> She came in and did a week's inspection in our school and then we heard that she was going to be our moderator. Now, that alarmed us because we thought, "Well, we want somebody who's going to be user friendly. We want somebody that we can say, "Look, what the so and so are we supposed to do with this, because it ain't working?" And how could you do that? With the best will in the world. The inspector had not delivered her report and you can't suddenly think of somebody in that different sort of role. Anyway, the Head came back (she had been ill with cancer) for four days before Easter. She shouldn't have done, but she did. So we didn't want to overburden her with these problems but we felt that certain things had to be addressed. Now, she got in touch with the moderator and said, "My staff are not happy and neither am I about this. You've only just been in and inspected us. Now you're coming in as a moderator. You can't expect the staff to relate to you properly or feel comfortable." And the moderator came in and did a bit of soft soap with the two of us and said, "Look, I'm quite capable of wearing different hats and I can assure you . . ." blah, blah, blah! . . . Well, we weren't reassured, we really weren't. So we didn't feel that we could turn to her.

Jenny's worst suspicions were realised when it came time for the moderator to visit. Here is how she described the experience.

> The first time she came in, and this is going back to what I have already said, she came in with her clipboard, see, and she sat at the table and I got four girls who were about to do the maths shapes, one which was very complicated. Now they were four bright girls, but they were on edge because I was on edge because she was there with the clipboard.

Was this because she felt she was being examined?

> Exactly! Especially as on the floor (she was sitting on a child size chair) she had got her teacher guide book - open - and all the time I was talking to the children, and I was very conscious of not leading them or giving them extra help, every time I said something, she looked down at her book and ruffled the pages and I thought, "She's checking on my wording. Any minute now she's going to say,"Just a minute!" . . . I said to her afterwards, "I was uncomfortable because you were looking through the book." "Ah, well," she said, "I'm not overly familiar with this particular SAT. This is the first time I've seen it done. So I had to keep checking to see what was supposed to be involved."

I asked Jenny how she reacted to having her moderator scrutinise her testing.

> Well, when I said to her that the group didn't perform well and I felt I ought to test them again because she was a stranger and that put them off, she said, "I do feel you could have been a little more helpful to them. I do feel you could have told them things more often." Now, if it had been one of the moderators who I know has recently left the classroom and who I regard as on a par, I could have accepted that, but as the couple or three weeks before she been as an inspector . . . was she . . . did she really know that she was not being as helpful and as relaxing as she could have been?

Jenny had a return visit, however.

> Now when she came in the second time . . . it was only the second week of the SAT by then and all sorts of things had gone on at school, the next time she came in was in the fourth week of the SATs and we were coming, well, trickling, very, very, slowly towards an end and by that time I had had enough of them and I thought, "Uhm, there are far more important things I should be doing than this," and I was relaxed and, "I don't care this time what she does. I'm getting on with it!" But she was different. This time she joined as a player in the game and she talked to the children and she didn't sit there silently with her clip board and referring to everything.

Why did Jenny think this had happened?

> I think somebody will have told her. But having said that, she, on neither occasion, asked us if there was any help that we needed. On neither occasion did she say, "How's it going? What are the problems you are finding? In fact, on the second occasion when we certainly had more that we could have said to her, she left half an hour before she should have done because my colleague had deliberately timetabled her to be doing a boring SAT. And so she left a half an hour before Karen's session had finished. . . . She was bored and she couldn't see the point.

What did Jenny think of the advisors generally?

> Some of them have been as supportive as they possibly can. When we were first told we were going to have a particular one, Valerie, we said, "Great, we know her. She's not long out of the classroom and she'll be sympathetic." But the ones who have been advisors, I think they thought it was a little beneath them. Pearl did say she thought she had been dragooned into it. But she gave us the impression that she hadn't actually sought this appointment. It had been imposed. . . . She certainly wasn't at any of the training meetings that we've been to, getting really involved like the others were, so quite what she's been doing during the time I don't know.

Did Jenny think the advisors were under any kind of pressure? Would they be blamed at all if anything went wrong?

> No! I don't think so. I think they're above blame. . . . When things have gone wrong at that level they're always shunted into another job. I don't think we have ever had a situation where an advisor has been blamed and disciplined or dismissed in a way that a teacher could be. They've been quietly shunted over into some lesser job, or asked if they would take on fewer responsibilities.

Susan also had a visit from her moderator and like Jenny felt that she was coming firstly to learn and secondly to inspect.

> S I kept something back until the Friday, so she could see it. So I picked the best children and made sure it was something they could do.
>
> R So you obviously felt that you were being inspected?

S Yes, I did.

R They're supposed to be advisors, not inspectors.

S Yes, but some of these children are so dozy!

R Why shouldn't they see your doziest child?

. . . Susan was silent.

Like many of the teachers I spoke to, Susan felt a deep resentment towards the advisors.

R What's your feeling about the advisors?

S An absolute waste of time.

R But they're getting paid to do it.

S Paid to do what, Rita?

R Well, you tell me.

S Well, I don't know either.

R Well, what are they doing?

S Well, there's a huge team up there. Perhaps they're up there reading. Absorbing it. I don't know what they're doing. But it's an awful waste of money isn't it? . . . The thing is, they're up there organizing training days and all this sort of thing. And they're training people to do something they've never done before. And they know less about it than the teacher who is doing it in the classroom. No, it's an appalling waste of money.

Money emerged as an issue when I talked with Pamela about moderators.

> The person we had was a Deputy Head who volunteered. This caused friction within the borough. People who had taken the King's shilling and were on one side and weren't on the other really I think. . . . the other problem that caused friction was that the moderators were junior teachers with no infants experience. My moderator was a junior teacher who I had

> worked with before. . . . They were the people who wanted to take the money I presume. . . . I don't think it was offered to everybody but it was offered to people who were looking to further their careers and who wanted to work outside on other things.

It was Pamela who had complained about the moderators not being willing to get their hands dirty. And money was on her mind.

> The feeling was that if you could get money for moderating, then, why couldn't you get money for doing it! You're doing the extra work. We were doing the work and they were just visiting us. . . . I don't know from other people. I just know from friends. We just felt that it was a lot of extra work in comparison with what the moderators had done and were prepared to do.

Angela faced a different sort of dilemma. Her Head had been asked to undertake an advisor's job but had refused.

> I found out from my Head that all the Heads were asked if they would do it and she said the Heads in this area got together and said they wouldn't do it because it was an unpaid job and they didn't see why they should go around moderating.

When a moderator was finally appointed, he turned out to be a junior head with no infants experience ("They never do have, Rita!") who was using his own supply cover to help his own Year 2 teacher. In any case, he didn't arrive in Angela's school until the fifth week of testing. Prior to that Angela had access to a hotline. Did she use it?

> I was going to use it at one point, but my Head wouldn't let me use it and said we would decide for ourselves what we did. . . . I could have done it without her knowledge. . . . I'm the Head of the infants, but she's the Head of the school.

Nearly all the teachers I spoke to were experiencing an increase in class size together with a reduction in funding. The Head teachers in England are now responsible for the local financial management of their schools. They were also responsible for ensuring that the tests were completed. What did the teachers think of their performance?

The Administrators

Another form of potential help for teachers were their administrators. The Heads were responsible for ensuring that the tests were administered correctly and on time. However, how much they involved themselves in this process varied enormously. Amongst the group of teachers I worked with reactions were mixed.

Elaine had mentioned the reading she had had to do before Easter. What was her Head's reaction?

> It was just piled on us, But the Head actually didn't want to know. She kept saying, "Here Elaine," handing me some information. And then she would say, "Do we have to know this?" and "What do we have to do with that?" And I used to think, I just wish she had read it herself and was reminding me of what I was supposed to be doing instead of me reminding her of what she was supposed to do. Was she supposed to fill in this form, was she supposed to do the other. I got to the stage when I said, "I can't cope with this!" I would have really like somebody to have been guiding me a little bit so I wasn't worrying so much about the administration and the procedures, like sending the forms off at the right time and that sort of thing. . . . I didn't consider it to be part of my job to remind the Head of what she should be doing. Having said that, her attitude was, well she didn't want to know, originally. She didn't agree with them. With all of this. She felt and still feels, I think, that the tests we normally do in school were quite all right. . . . Basically she's a very kind woman and she couldn't have gone on not getting involved at all. She's extremely busy. But Humberside actually issued us with a whole load of documents before the official ones came out. A big pile of photocopied stuff. She came one day with this great pile of stuff and said, "Here, this is for you."

Patricia and Jane had different experiences with their Heads. But they both experienced avoidance strategies. At one of Patricia's meetings one of the Heads asked what he should do if his teacher was away.

> I said, "You haven't read the document, have you, because the Head is responsible for making sure the SATs in his or her school are carried out." He didn't know that. A lot of the Heads weren't aware. A lot of them

> thought they could stand back and just make the right noises and the Year Two teachers would take full responsibility.

Jane described her own situation.

> In my school I don't know what my Head would have done if I'd been away. He wouldn't have had a clue what to do. I mean, he's a lovely man and he's very nice to work with, but he just says, you know, that's your pigeon. He didn't come into my class once. He didn't offer his services once. At the time I didn't think much of it until I heard what your (Patricia's) Head had done. He came in and took some of your groups.

Patricia's Head had come in and taken some of the tests. Jane was annoyed at how much Patricia's Head had been prepared to do compared with her own.

> He let the Year Two teachers off assemblies. He took them off staff meetings. They didn't do any of their PE. I still had to carry on with my PE. My Head did nothing when I think about it.

Mary's Head did all the reading tests for her, but refused to discuss the results. The same Head kept all the tests under lock and key until Easter, even though there were no instructions to that effect. He was obviously under the impression that these tests were like the old 11 plus. Doreen's Head asked her every day how she was doing, but didn't help her with them in the classroom.

Ann and Sophie not only disliked their Head but considered him incompetent. Sophie's chief complaint was that she had a class of 33 to test including 3 statemented children and the Deputy Head had only 19 in his top junior class and no testing to do. Here's how Sophie saw this scenario evolve in her school.

> Our Head worries about his back. Governors have been given this power. At least we have been told they have this power. But how can they shift the Head? Because that's what we're talking about in our school. I mean he's got to go. But he's only 40 odd. He kissed the right butts. . . . Our Head has no idea of man management or money management and, as far as I am concerned, that's what he's employed for. So he shouldn't be there. . . . Stephen plays this game with the governors. He always portrays them as

"a them against us situation" which has always annoyed me. I know a lot of the governors and I've taught most of their children and I know them socially and whatever and they're actually quite a good bunch. They don't expect to tell us how we should teach and they value the staff in the school. But whenever he goes to the governor's meeting he always goes into this "them and us" situation and he does this because he's frightened of them.

What was he frightened of?

You know, he has no power of logic. He's not a good arguer. I mean, he lost 27,000 pounds. He told us we had all of this money and we decided what to do with it. We asked him if he was sure and he said yes. But of course, the County came back a few weeks later and he had left off a member of staff. For goodness sake! 24,000 pounds he lost us!.

What about the numbers in her class?

This year, with the high class numbers, no-one wanted to take the top class so suddenly, Mark, his Deputy, who's paid to take the flack, had to do it. So suddenly, for the first time, the Head put the classes in year groups. I landed up with 33 and he (Mark) ended up with 19. I hollered that I couldn't have a class of 33 with 3 statemented and him with a class of 19. The parents would revolt! Well, the parents bloodywell didn't revolt. The staff did! We felt so strongly that we asked to be present at one of the governor's meetings, to put our case, to say that it wasn't justifiable. Now, who's our teacher rep on the governors? Mark? Obviously the Head's there. And Mark!

R But they elected him!

S Yes! We were a bit naive when we did. I mean, the person who was there before was the one who had retired over the National Curriculum.

R How did they feel about her?

S Well, I was glad she went. She was awful.

R So you went to the governors and asked to be present?

S I was refused. And it was from the Head. He phoned up the head of the governors who he was as thick as thieves with and he refused

> me permission to appear. So the next thing we did was, we wrote a letter. We sat in my classroom and we said that a statemented child counted as 5 on the role and their name should be written down 5 times because they are the equivalent of 5 children. So, in fact, in my class I have 45. His argument was that I got some support. But the support is less than one fifth of the time and you have to do a lot of the resource stuff. You've got to learn to sign. . . . That's all extra load.

Barbara's Head decided not to mention anything about the assessment and testing until Barbara had "settled in". Barbara suffered a great deal of stress because of this. When I asked her whether she thought her Head had appreciated what she had gone through she replied,

> Maybe, but he thinks . . . he just thinks that's part . . . that's part of what teaching's all about!

Angela believed that teachers became Heads just to get out of the classroom.

> We had a very ambitious junior teacher. He left secondary teaching. He was a PE teacher and he had worked out that he wouldn't be promoted there. So he came into the Primary and he did, well I think he only did about four years and he only had experience of 4th and 3rd years - top juniors and then he got an Assistant Head's job. It was ever so funny because when he arrived at this school he was then put in the admission class, which was pretty awful really, wasn't it. For those children. He hadn't got a clue. He hadn't ever taught young children, reception, so that nearly killed him. And then, when the Head was pregnant and went on maternity leave, and he was acting Head, he said it was a walkover. It was the easiest thing out, being a Head, instead of actually teaching, even juniors.

How helpful was Angela's Head during the testing?

> I feel my Head could have been more helpful. . . . She's been off-loading everything on to her assistant Head and he's so piled up with work. I mean, everything that comes to do with the National Curriculum, she says, "Here Chris. Read this!"

What did Angela's Head do then?

> She's taking early retirement now so I think she was just opting out of the whole thing. . . . But I was under quite a bit of pressure from the Head to get it right, even though she said it didn't matter. She would say it didn't matter one day but then another day it did matter. And the same when we got the SAT results. I mean, every result we got wasn't going to tie up with the SATs. But she was all hyped up and said, "Did we want the chap to come in?" and I said, "No!"

Angela didn't get any help from her Head during the SATs, but she didn't mind.

> On the whole, thank goodness, we were left alone. . . . I am a teacher. We felt it would be another added stress to have somebody else there.

However, many of the teachers I spoke to disagreed. They were only to happy to have some classroom help. The quantity and quality varied.

Classroom Help

Teachers received three kinds of classroom help during the SATs period. Firstly they were given detailed instructions from the DES. Secondly, teachers expected additional resources such as reading books and science and maths equipment. Finally, some of them received assistance with their teaching.

The DES Instructions

Apart from the amount of reading involved, teachers were mostly positive about the instruction booklets put out by SEAC. Wendy commented, "There was lots of reading. You couldn't just read it through once and know it. You had to read and read and read." Doreen, though, felt that the books were "great" and "everything you needed to know was in them". This was just as well, because for many of the teachers this was the only help they got in devising their testing strategies. Negative comments were made about the suggested time lines for tests, but the instructions themselves were very specific, even down to the words teachers were to use in administering the tests.

Resources

Sometimes the stress of testing was brought about by lack of resources. These tended to fall into two categories: supplies for assessment and testing such as science equipment, books and even fruit and documents for keeping track of curriculum assessment.

Almost all the teachers complained about the need for books in order to do the reading SATs. In fact, some of them found out about which books they needed through the newspapers before they heard from SEAC.

> (Angela) We didn't have the books. Well, they dribbled in. We started off with not many at all. . . . I mean, we didn't know what to get. . . . The first we knew about these books was when they were printed in the newspaper. . . . We knew they cost a lot of money, but we wouldn't buy them in case the newspaper hadn't got the right list.

In Barbara's case, the school only managed to purchase four Level 2 books which she shared with the teacher next door. Susan had to go and find them herself.

> One of the pressures was, you know, the list of reading books that came out. Well, we had a few of the Level 2's. I went into town. I thought, "I'm going to go through these and buy these myself. Well, the Head, Jean, bought some and everyone's trying to buy some. And then, I thought, well, Dillon's in town. And then I went round to various libraries and book shops looking for books. And all this takes time.

How many did Susan round up in the end?

> Well, we had about five or six and three or four of those I got from the library. Then we went out buying and looking through the extracts of bits the children had to read and I thought, well, these are suitable for our children. The stories would be more familiar to them. But we didn't have the books. So I spent several afternoons chasing around looking for the books. And that's just time wasting, isn't it. . . . They said we would be provided with resources and we weren't. We weren't provided with any

> resources whatsoever.

What about the science resources?

> Well, I spent a lot of time getting those, and with my own money. . . . In science I bought all the fruit and vegetables. . . . when you see them weighing the apples and bananas and the condition they were in after they had finished with them and the pears. The pears were terribly dear. . . . I bought a lot of apples and pears and they were terribly dear.

Didn't the school have arrangements for paying for that?

> S No! I suppose I could have asked.
>
> R Why didn't you?
>
> S Oh, I don't know. I felt mean.
>
> R Mean? Why should you buy things for your class? Your salary isn't for buying thing to help the government out. You're not a charity!
>
> S Look, I bought two or three of these reading books, but I shouldn't have to buy those.

Susan also had problems with the scales. The school didn't have anything suitable, so even though she was asking the children to compare weights, the scales weren't sophisticated enough to do this. There was no money to purchase a different one. Pamela was scathing about the reduction in resources in her area.

> I taught 38 when I first qualified and I'm back up now. . . . There was a stage in Bexley when we had equipment and we had resources in the schools and they're all gradually being removed and it's all going back again rather than forward.

Classroom Help

During the testing period the teachers in this study exercised a number of options.

Sometimes they worked alone. Others had help from within the school. Heads, ancillary staff and nursery workers all appear to have been called upon. Occasionally, schools were provided with an extra teacher for part of the time. In one or two cases more imaginative solutions were applied to the problem. Jane, for example, rounded up volunteers.

> This year all the help in my class was voluntary. . . . I had a friend of mine who came in. She's a qualified teacher and a supply. She came in. I did at least know that the other children were getting quality teaching. She doesn't get paid to do this you know.

I asked Jane if her Head knew about this.

> Oh Yes! He was thrilled to bits.

What did Patricia think about this?

> I think we are professionals and I think if you worked in a hospital you would say, "Oh, while you're visiting could you just go and change that person's drip or their bed pan. We are professionals. We are trained to do a job. The other teachers had to suffer. They lost all their help.

In Jane's school the special needs teachers was used to help with the tests.

> She was supposed to be with another class. We were taking her away from children who did have special needs who weren't getting her for that 6 weeks. Every Thursday afternoon for 6 weeks those children were not actually receiving help from her.

Wendy and Elaine also got help. Humberside allocated 10 days of supply to all the teachers involved in the testing. But there was clearly panic in the administrative camp as Wendy pointed out.

> We had a letter during the assessment time, before the SATs actually started, from Humberside, which suggested that to administer these tests parents could be brought in to do the administration duties in the school to release people like Diane, who's our school secretary, to come and help us out with our tests. They actually put that down in a letter. That didn't go down too well. . . . How they dare put that in writing I just don't know. . . .

Elaine continued,

> I think that was just somebody's bright idea. I think they were flapping like mad. I think they realised what a lot it was to cope with and they were casting around for any solution.

Mary, Susan and Doreen were given a Nursery Nurse.

> (Doreen) The Head bought in a Nursery Nurse for 2 days a week. Every week. She was extra from school funds. She was not normally in the school. We used our LMS funds.

I asked Doreen how widespread she thought this practice was.

> Oh, I think it was quite widespread. The only thing is, though, the NUT said you must try and do it on your own and not have any kind of help at all and see, and to be seen to fail. That's what we should have done, because without an extra pair of hands it would have been quite difficult.

Susan felt guilty about her help.

> In the second week I did have an NNEB training student in, which was great. I gave them little maths books and set them up with work. It was awful really. I mean, she was a good kid, but she was only 17 and she was quite good. But I shouldn't be doing that.

What did Doreen feel about the school bringing a nursery nurse in to help her?

> Well, I was grateful.

Sophie was not! She had been given a variety of help by her Head, but in the end wished she could have just done it on her own.

> I had supply cover for four weeks every morning. The school decided to buy in supply time. I said that I had 33 and there was no way that I could do it. But, in retrospect, I think I would rather have had the class. We bought in supply, well, actually the hearing impaired assistant. In fact, she's a qualified teacher. She had them two and half mornings. That didn't cost the school anything. A special needs had them for half a morning doing language and then a supply teacher had them for two mornings a week. Well, the supply teacher was worse than useless. She was awful. And I had the dilemma of, do I withdraw the children and, like, assess them in

> groups, and make them special, or do I do it in the classroom? I decided on the latter. I said, it's bad enough that they know they are being assessed. I told them. I thought they had the right to know. Although it was going to be fairly normal. And they had to know because they were having all these different teachers. And, in fact, working alongside in the classroom was awful. The other teacher was totally incompetent. Some of the kids can't count up to more than thirty, some can. One day she said they were doing thousands, 96,000 pounds. What does it look like? For God's sake!

The disruption caused by extra help and the effect the testing had on children and teachers will be discussed in the next section.

The Effects of Testing on Teaching and Learning.

"On the floating and sinking I was almost sinking with them!"

Mary, June 12th, 1991.

Experiencing the SATs.

I asked Patricia and Jane to describe for me how they felt classroom practice had changed because of the testing policy. Jane replied:

> The quality of work suffered greatly and the writing standard deteriorated. The presentation of their work deteriorated. Their behavior. You weren't giving them the attention. Normally, you don't sit with one group for an hour, without giving a lot of input to the rest. The most you spent with one group was 15 or 20 minutes at the most.

What about the control they had over the working day?

> (Jane) I found that when children brought things to show in the morning, because with the SATs I tried to start as soon as I possibly could. So I'd give them their little list and tell them what they had to do for the day. You know, the assignment. And then I would say, "Right, I want this group now". And they always bring in things to show and I just said, "I haven't got time". Whereas, before, you could have done a day's topic on

> what they brought in.

Patricia described a particular event to make her point.

> They actually had an author in who makes pop-up books and this child was thrilled to bits and she came in, and she had actually bought a couple of these books and said, "Please, please, Miss, can I show them," and the teacher said, "Sorry, I can't do it now. You'll have to do it tomorrow." I was waiting to watch the assessments and I said, "Why don't you come and show me?" And her little face lit up and she was so happy. But the teacher didn't have time. And I fully sympathized because I wouldn't have done. She was setting all these kids up and she knew I was waiting to watch her assess.

Jane continued:

> Even if you didn't have the moderator you knew you had to get through four groups that morning. And I used to think, "If I don't start now I'm not going to get through them."

But despite their despair at the intensity of the testing period, Jane and Patricia had positive things to say about the effect it had on their teaching.

> It's made you focus more on the points that need to come over. You think, if this is what they are going to be assessed on next time, you really try and hone in on those main points. Which I think is good in a way. I mean, I suppose that is the most positive thing.

By the time I visited Patricia and Jane, testing was over. How were things going now?

> Oh! It's lovely. We're hatching eggs and we've got tadpoles and changing into frogs. It's so much lighter. Their writing's improved and you can go around all the time.

Mary was really enthusiastic when she started the tests, but things fell apart at the end of the second week. Mary's children became bored.

> I wanted to stop the tests. I asked my Head teacher. I said, "I've had enough. The children have had enough. Can I stop?" He said, "No!"

At the end of the fourth week, Mary stopped anyway.

> I took a week off. Not a week off school. I took a week off the tests and I went back to my normal routine. I only had the Level 3's left to do and it changed the whole attitude after. I had to do something because they were getting quite restless and bored during that week and all I did was catching up work they could continue the next week when I knew I would have to get back testing again.

Mary felt that her teaching had changed completely during the testing period, and she was deeply resentful.

> I think that it has been imposed on us and I think we've all done it like fools really. . . . We had no choice at all. We were presented with a pack and you knew you had to have a result at the end.

Sophie was very unhappy about the testing process.

> I did feel very negative about them. I did and I still do. . . . I did try and make it as interesting and innovative as possible. But obviously with the maths activity which you're doing with about ten groups, by the time you're getting on to number nine you're not feeling quite as sparky! . . . I tried to be objective and some of the things were good, the floating and sinking and the maths game. They are things I have done in the past and they are good primary practice. But I felt very cross that they were forcing me to do them and to fit children into slots, which you can't do anyway. I mean, what a child knows today he might have forgotten tomorrow.

Sophie also felt the tests became very mechanical and she didn't like this as at all.

> I think it would be a sad thing if we all became automatons!

Susan was worried her children wouldn't know how to do some of the tests so she spent a number of afternoons training them.

> In the English, the non-chronological writing, they hadn't done it . . . . I spent the Wednesday afternoon doing it. I thought, "Right, even the poorest child in the classroom will be able to do that; be able to sit down and do whatever they said. But it wasn't tested. . . . Nobody informed me of that. . . . You see, they changed it. You get all this information. You plan the work, and then, all of a sudden, they're not doing that, they're doing something else. I mean we haven't had much time to digest it, have

> we?. . . A lot of anxiety was created, wasn't it? I mean, you think you've got to test every damn thing on there.

Pamela had a similar view:

> There was another reservation I had about the SATs. We were asking them to perform tasks of which they had no experience. And you prepare anybody for an exam by giving them a similar experience. The cooperation we were asking for, we had never asked them to work in that way before. . . . I would have liked more time to give them the experience in working a group so that they all put in equally. Because that was what was lacking. Because, whenever you had a group, no matter how you did it, you could not get people who were shy to say what they wanted to say and the people that were forthright to shut up.

Susan reflected on the year just gone.

> I mean, if you look at the way I would teach normally, I was just talking to someone the other day, this year I don't think I've made a single word card. That's gone out the window.

She was also upset at the level of coercion that entered her classroom.

> One kid in my classroom, he was a very shy little boy and he wouldn't do it. He said he didn't want to make a game. And I said, "Come on. You can do it. So I sat down at dinner time said to myself, "Well, I've got to tick something off," and I just made him make something so I could tick off his box.

Pamela was distressed at the effect on her teaching.

> Of all the criticism, I think the thing that is hardest for me to bear is the amount of teaching that I have not done. I find it hangs on me. Guilt. It hangs on me, for what I haven't done.

Children's Learning

Clearly, children were affected by the testing process. What did the teachers feel about this?

Patricia and Jane felt that the tests had caused serious disruption.

J The children loved being the centre of attention. The children who suffered were the ones who were not in your groups. They didn't get your attention. And the quality of their work went down. You didn't have the time to sit down and go through what they had done that day. The quality deteriorated. Everyone's work went down when the tests were going on. The children loved doing the tests, but this was because they got your attention. Only one child asked if it was a test!

P The most worrying aspect of all this was the fact that where there was a class that was a mixture, where reception children had just been admitted, those reception children rioted. They rolled on the floor. They clobbered each other. The were filling in sheets where it said colour two fish green, two red, and three yellow, they were all blue. That was directly because the teacher could not leave the SAT activity. Those children had no model of behavior. They didn't have any teacher input. They didn't make a relationship with the teacher or with other children. They had no model of anything. Those children were just there and they were just given things to get on with.

J Sometimes they would cry and scream in the morning and you would say, "I haven't got time for that!" You'd be trying to do an assessment and you would have two, one on this lap, one by your arm, you know. . . . It's easier with a class of thirty all doing the same, rather than having a mix or just assessing fourteen. At least the others of that age are capable to certain extent of doing things without attention. Only to a certain extent though. Their concentration span is a little bit more than the others though.

P I don't think it was even a neutral experience for those children. I think it was a negative experience. That's the most worrying thing. It's not just that they were left. I think their behavior was regressing. They had no idea what school was all about. They didn't know how to put things away or get things out. It was awful.

Patricia and Jane's children enjoyed the attention. Mary's children liked the tests and the attention too, but at least one of them burst into tears. Why did that happen? She described the floating and sinking experience.

M One of my better children, he had been very good throughout the tests and had been at that particular one for three hours. I started at a quarter past ten and when I said to him, "Matthew do you think the test is fair?" he cried!

R Did he understand what you were asking?

M Well, when I composed him and quietened him I said, "Look, there's nothing to worry about, I'm not asking you something that you'll never understand." But he thought I was asking if he'd done it in a fair or unfair way.

R To a child, it doesn't have the same meaning, fair in a "fair test".

M Not at all. You're quite right. The point I'm trying to make, by the end of that time the child was too tired to think. . . . he cried, and he's a very, very reticent child and he never shows feelings and he'll never wait for you to tell him what to do, Matthew will have gone on with his mathematics and finished it. And he's quite capable, actually. But he doesn't like question and answer, but he was going at it and he persevered right through, and I said, "That's it!" And it was rather unfair when, for example, the Level 3 materials was pure guess work.

Mary took a week off testing after four weeks because of the deteriorating behavior in her class.

> At the end of the second week, going into the third week, that's when it started. Simply because the better children were the only ones continuing with them. So, the ones who had fallen by the wayside, if you like, were the ones who hadn't got the ability or the common sense to occupy themselves, and they were getting bored and distracted. But this is what was happening you see. "I've broken my pencil, why can't I have another!" It was getting you up tight and I felt at the end of the fourth week I wanted to stop.

Mary went back to her normal routine for a week. But how did she feel about the children's education? How had it been affected?

> I feel, quite honestly . . . it's a very sort of strange thing to say, but children in our area especially need structuring with the three R's quite honestly and

> if they lose two weeks of that . . . I'm not saying that I wouldn't include things like floating and sinking, I would do that, but that would come into my topic and into my book and I would gauge it as I wanted. I would know how much to give the children, when they were tired and when to switch to something else. But being geared and structured to complete a set of tests would not be part of my pattern again.

Jenny had a similar experience. What concerned her was the way teachers were obliged to deny assistance to the children in the interests of 'fair' testing.

> It's a very hard thing. If you're a caring infants teacher you can't see a child struggle. . . . We'd done a lot of shopping you see, they were used to that. I did have a group of little girls who are not very -, well -, they're shy. They didn't like making their feelings known and they don't like offering opinions very often. But they're very bright little girls, but they just can't articulate freely. So they didn't actually get upset, they just withdrew. But the one who cried desperately needed the prop of her word book and in the end I let her. I couldn't stand to see the poor child upset. But, of course, her assessment was 'working within Level 1' at that SAT.

Did Mary's children benefit in any way from the experience?

> No, I don't think they did benefit because they were doing so many silly things as gap fillers to fill in their time, colouring in. And if I showed you what Clwyd gave us as gap fillers for these children you would be amazed that they would give such things to 7 year olds. Colouring in. How many words can you think of that begin with C. Well, you give those to children in our area and they can think of Cat, Cap and that's it. Well, they're so many more words beginning with 'c'. "Can you write this for me in my dictionary, Miss!" This is what you had.

Who produced the activity sheets?

> A practising teacher, who was trying to be clever and please a little band of people that she'd been given a job to do. "Well, you're a good teacher. You devise something that can keep these children occupied." And I didn't take one of them out of the pack after that. I didn't take one of those gap fillers out. I thought, I'll do my own.

Wendy and Elaine were also unhappy that many essential parts of teaching were discarded during the tests.

E Although I did have a lot of time with a few children for short spells, I do think overall I was neglecting them. Part of that is that you get into a routine normally, and this wasn't normal routine. These children, who are very easily disrupted and get very excitable very easily, their behavior deteriorated and once or twice I thought I was losing them. I didn't actually. I had a supply teacher in every Friday morning for a while and they were behaving very badly. I found it so embarrassing. I didn't know whether to intervene. I mean, I was fairly near at hand, or to leave her to it. That sort of thing. I couldn't really believe that they could behave so badly. They played her up. That's not to say that they don't play me up, because they do. I felt that things like reading, ordinary, just hearing reading, just keeping up to date with what they could do. That went because I was relying on helpers to do that. . . . In the sense of hearing reading, they kept up really well, but I didn't. They were heard, but for quite a long time I worried how they were getting on. I knew what page they had read, and this sort of thing, but it's not the same. . . . And I didn't do most of the reading assessments, because they Head did that.

W They didn't have their normal curriculum, reading went by the board . . . normal things that we would have done like visits to the library, we did manage one visit, but it did go by the board. Outside walks that we would normally do went by the board.

E Very mundane activities a lot of the time too. . . . occupying type activities.

How much 'busy' work did Wendy and Elaine use during the tests?

E If I gave them a worksheet I felt guilty.

W Well, yes. Because all our educational philosophy for years and years now is not to give children worksheets and filling in stuff. It's all got to be worthwhile activities. Well, you can't do worthwhile activities when you were doing the SATs.

Even though Doreen was unhappy with the tests, she seemed to manage them within the classroom with minimal disruption. However, even her children suffered.

I had spoken to some teachers who had left their SATs children to get on

> with it. Well, I didn't think that was quite fair. I felt I had to be with them. A lot of people did that floating and sinking and let them get on with it. . . . You see, I don't think you can do it properly unless you're with them, can you? Nor with the maths, or anything. The writing you could. With the science and the maths you had to sit with them to throw two dice and see if they did it right . . . . I don't think everybody did it properly. I might not have done it properly. I don't know!

Doreen didn't produce any "fillers". Her class carried on with their normal classroom work. But, if she had spent approximately an hour with each group of four during the testing, how did her class cope?

> Well, they would come to me! I'd explain, I would say at the beginning, "Well, I've got to sit here and this is important." You get used to it really. They just came to me as they normally do for marking or for words.

Doreen had been given some help.

> Yes, not all the time. But I worked out that certain assessments would be done during those times.

Doreen only tested for an hour each day. Overall, how much were the children affected?

> Well, I didn't teach at all. I didn't do any teaching as such because, you know, when you gather them together for a class lesson or something, or you introduce something new or you're doing a science topic. Well, I didn't do any of that. But at least they did carry on with their normal work. I never once said, "Oh well, draw a picture or something, or read." I think, really, that helped them, because they really didn't think there was anything different going on.

But how did Doreen's children behave?

> Well, that was disruptive. I can't say that they were terrible, but I noticed that they were different. Because, also, they do react to somebody else in the room. They're not an easy class either.

Ann and Sophie were concerned about whether the children knew they were being tested and the effect this would have on them.

S I would say mostly they were happy because I spent the whole time joking with them. I mean, I'm very lucky. The class I've got now are really a quite extraordinary class. We've got a tremendous relationship. Very, . . . I mean when I say, "jump!" they jump. But, at the same time we can have a good joke, we can have a good laugh. I literally joked my way through it. Especially one of the maths one, the filling in of the sheets on the shopping. I mean that really did, that almost traumatized my life. Because it was the one that was so obviously a test. Fill in the missing blanks. It was obviously the most like a test I think. And the fact that the sheets were printed. I mean the maths, 'handling data'. For a level 3 child the axes were there, all the spacing had been done for them. I thought it was appalling. . . . If they had said to me, "Do a graph about so and so," I could have made them do the work, or, in fact, I could have done a sheet, but as soon as they knew they were printed sheets obviously they knew they were tests.

So did the children know they were being tested?

S Oh, without a doubt. Definitely. No matter how much they enjoyed the task.

A I mean, some of them even came to you didn't they, with their reading and said, "Am I going to have my test this morning?"

Like Patricia, Pamela was concerned at the effect the testing had had on the summer intake of infants in her class. However, her children also enjoyed the testing.

> They were in their seventh heaven because they were getting an awful lot of attention above and beyond everybody else. And they were enjoying it. Children wanted to join in when other groups were being tested. Especially the infants who weren't involved in it in any way shape or form. At least the class next door where everyone was doing SATs they all got a turn at the floating and sinking. We couldn't with all the best will in the world let our other children do it. we just didn't have the time. . . . They were asking, "Why can't we do it? Why can't we do it?"

But even though the children were enjoying the tests, Pamela knew they were not doing the work she felt they should be doing.

P At the moment, what I'm doing about it is, my friend and I are going in half an extra morning each to try and catch up on things we haven't done.

R But that's unpaid labour.

P Yes!

R To resolve your guilt?

P Yes! Isn't it awful?

R Do you think it's awful?

P Yes! I think it's terrible. And I think the people who don't realise it are the government because the children are the pawns in the game. It's like kicking a dog. The dog can't tell anyone it's being kicked. It's like children. They can't go home and say, "Do you realise we haven't covered anything this term." Because they don't know. So they can't report back what they are not doing.

Teacher Stress

Although only a few children seemed to have suffered much stress during the testing period, many of the teachers in this study experienced considerable stress both during the assessment stage of the process and during the SATs themselves.

Mary, who had been really quite relaxed about the tests in January, told me in June,

> It drained me terribly. I couldn't believe it was possible to feel so drained. In our area we all work hard. All teachers work hard. But I did not feel I could be so drained after administering these tests. It took me six weeks with twenty children.

Wendy and Elaine were exhausted by Easter and the SATs had not even begun. Sophie, who by June was pregnant and going on maternity leave commented.

> My life is tolerable. I still love my job. But I didn't enjoy that five weeks. I would have given up my job after the first week.

Barbara worked night after night to keep up with the work.

> B It wasn't a very happy time at all on a personal level.
>
> R I would say it's not the responsibility of the teacher to work night after night. What do you think. What's your responsibility?
>
> long silence. . . .
>
> B What I think and do are two different things. You're caught all the time. I feel responsible for the children. I feel that I should give them the best that I can if that involves me working myself to death, then, unfortunately, sometimes I do it!

Angela blamed herself for the stress she was under.

> I do think it's a bit my personality in that I'm the kind of person who will worry about things. . . . I think I was probably angry as well. I did feel angry about the fact that I had all these sheets to fill in which I considered a waste of time. And I was expected to look at the National Curriculum to see what this meant, and you know, there was tremendous amount of work that I, that the two of us in the school, were having to do.

Were the rest of the staff at all sympathetic?

> Oh Yes! And all the staff would say was, "We're jolly glad we're not you Angela - laughing!

But this did not help your stress?

> No!

Test Credibility

Teachers in the study were concerned with many aspects of the assessment and testing process. Were the tests fair? Were they reasonable? Were they appropriate? Who had devised them? Were the teachers sufficiently prepared to administer these tests?

Did assessment and testing reveal anything they didn't already know? Were they useful as a measure of progress for parents? Was the National Curriculum a good idea?

A fair test?

It would take another study to examine in detail all the comments and criticisms teachers made regarding the assessments and tests. All that is possible here to do is give examples of the main points that were made and demonstrate how widespread the views were amongst the teachers in this study.

The Reading Tests

Some teachers in this study did the reading tests themselves, but in other cases, this work was undertaken by the Head. Where teachers did the reading they found the miscue analysis useful. Even the most sceptical of the teachers believed that they would use this method again.

> J I thought the reading was O.K. really. And the miscue analysis that I was really worried about I thought was quite easy really.

> E Yes, I did think it was useful. But I don't think it's the only way I would assess reading. . . . I also thought that to do it takes time.

A number of teachers commented on the fact that some children had been given access to the set books at home, whilst others had not. The implication was, therefore, that some children had an advantage over others, especially as part of the test required children to predict the ending!

> Jane A lot of parents had bought the books. I had only six for Level 3 but it was enough. Six was sufficient. You had to choose a book they weren't familiar with, but this was difficult. They had read them. It doesn't really make that much difference. It only made a difference sometimes. One child, I put him on one level and he

> didn't quite get it. He had nine wrong. But I decided to try him on another book.

(There was an assumption in the reading instructions that children would not have read these books before. If this was the case then the rule was certainly not applied amongst the teachers I worked with. Some gave children books they had read before, and others didn't.) Many teachers felt that the reading levels assigned to the books were inaccurate, or so wide as to be meaningless. Susan believed that an astute selection of books could even affect the Level awarded. Sophie felt that the reading and writing tests were poorly constructed and of little value in determining standards. She had this to say about the reading levels.

> The reading, actually, I thought, the reading and the writing stood out as the most ridiculous in the fact of the difference between the levels, and also the difference between the Level 1 and Level 2 books. I mean, the "Little Bear" book was so easy for them to read, and, in fact, in the end, I thought well I may as well SAT them all on this one because, like, there was "Mrs. Jolly's Joke Shop", I forget some of the others. Some of the others, the children really had to have a sense of humour to read it, but the "Little Bear" was so simplistic compared to the other ones that really if I had tested them on "The Little Bear" - Oh, I even said "tested", that's how cloned I am! If I had "assessed" them on the "Little Bear" they would have achieved Level 2.

R But you choose the books!

S Yes!

R On what basis did you choose the books?

S Well, we got them all. We had all of them.

R What, all the books?

S Yes!

R Well, that's a first!

(Laughter)

R	Well, we're in the south of England now, and so we've got all the books. In the north of England the teachers I have met have claimed that all those rich parents in the South had bought them all up, so they're going to do all right!

S	I can understand their anger at it, because with the Level 1 books, when I assessed my hearing impaired children I had to assess them at Level 1, and with the Level 1 books it was like written into the teacher's book that these were books that children would . . . have at home and have experience of. Well, how dare they. They're so middle class. My daughter will. But how dare they assume that every person, every child would gain access to this kind of literature. This was who the tests were devised for, the middle of the road kind of child.

R	What kind of classroom or school did the government have in mind when they devised these tests?

S	Our school. Out of my class of thirty three I would say thirteen or fourteen would achieve Level 3 - almost every attainment target. Some achieved Level 4.

R	What did you think about the standards that were set?

S	I think some of them were so easy. The two that worried me more than anything were the reading because the Level Two, I think there were six statements about, you know, using an alphabet, knowing a book was a book, putting things in alphabetical order, several things, but the Level 2 one, the one that stood out in my mind was "read with some intonation and fluency". Now that they could do five out of six and the only one they could slip up on was, they didn't use any intonation. They would have been very fluent, but if I felt they didn't read it with any intonation - one of them was "Hello", or "Help!". . . if I felt they couldn't do that, if they had done five of the six statements I then had to put them down to Level 1, well then I had to assess them at Level 1, which was silly. I had to ask them to identify some words, name some letters.

A	The thing is, when you spoke to the advisors about this they said they should be a 1. And that's only because Sophie questioned intonation whereas other teachers wouldn't bother.

> S You see, I thought the N-1 rule might apply. But it didn't. And in the writing they had to get all of them. You've got "writing isolated letters", "know that text carries a meaning", "being able to point out words at the bottom of the page". In Level 2 you've got "demarcate at least five sentences". I mean the difference is incredible. I mean, some of my kids that I assessed at Level 2 wrote like a half a page story. They were really good. I read them and I read them to the advisor. But there wasn't one full stop or capital letter . . . so a half a page story that had taken them a half an hour was a Level 1 which was the same as Dave who came to me a couple of years ago and couldn't hold a pencil. I mean now, he can hold a pencil and he knows sounds and all that, but he was one of my hearing impaired children and he was achieving the same level as someone who had written a whole page simply because he didn't put in capital letters. I think that work was a Level 3 really.

Angela was also upset about the requirement for capital letters and full stops in order to attain Level 2.

> In my opinion, infants don't really understand capital letters and full stops. But to get to Level 2 they had to. Level 3 - well - none of them could get Level 3 because that was the full range of punctuation. So, I mean, really, I had already worked out with my teacher assessment that basically they were all going to be Level 2, weren't they? I really think that if it had come out at Level 3 it wouldn't be true, because I don't really believe that there's any 7 year old who can fully punctuate English and know what they are doing and understand it. I mean, at secondary level they get those things wrong, don't they?

Like Sophie, Susan had a number of comments to make about the way parents would view the progress of their child and whether, in fact, the reading tests were either valid or reliable.

> R The parents' brochures say that the aim is to raise the standard around the country and that these tests will benefit the children. There is this implication that they can measure progress in a comparative way around the country because everybody's doing the same test. Do you think they achieved their goal?

S No! Because I don't - it doesn't really measure progress. The Level 1 is a non starter. Level 2 is the grade they should be at.

R One of the things people have said is that Level 2 is so broad that a child could be at Level 2 now. Next year they would still be on Level 2. The parents would be no further ahead in knowing how their child has progressed.

S These tests are not standardized. That's the one thing they're not. For example, the reading books. I was speaking to someone who comes to our school who's involved in the National Curriculum testing and he said, the reading ages, they did them on the books, and you know what the range was for Level 2 - Seven to Nine. So some schools who might not have all of these books, their children could be tested on a reading age of 8 - 8½. Now that's why in my school I spent so much time searching around for the easiest books to try and give these kids a Level 2. The easiest reading books only have a reading age of about 7. The range goes from 7 to above 9.

R You wanted to give them a Level 2. Why?

S Well, I suppose a whole host of reasons. I thought you had to be fair to those children, especially the bilingual children who had really made a tremendous effort with their reading and could read and had made progress and this should be acknowledged shouldn't it? And if there is a Level 2 there for the getting if you can find the right book, then I think I should try and do it - get the book.

R This whole idea of fairness. Supposing your children had been tested by someone outside the school with their choice of books, not yours, and tested your children and decided that in fact 20 were at Level 1, is that not fair?

S That would have been fair if they had used exactly the same book with each child and each child in every other school around the country. But there is a wide choice of book with reading ages between 7 and 9.

R So the government is giving this idea that we will get some measure of the reading level of children around the country and you're saying, "No, you're not! Level 2 is so wide it gives no indication at all really."

S No!

R I mean, you could, unless they were really bad, put most of your children in Level 2 - if you were really pushed.

S Well, no I couldn't really. I have some very poor readers.

R How many?

S About half a dozen. I've had four non-readers in this year.

R So it does make a distinction between the really hopeless and the ones who can read reasonably well.

S Yes! But they're going to miss it unless I find the right book. Having said that, during the last half term I went into town and found another book that I hadn't been able to get hold of and I knew it would be at a lower reading age and it is. It's about 7. I think it must be the lowest and I've tested two children on that and they got it. They had already been marked at Level 1 and I can't do anything about it. Because the book I tested them on, "Frog and Toad" which had a reading age of about 7.4 - 7.6, that was the easiest one I could find. They're only allowed 8 errors - they had 12. On this book, I know their reading had come on a little bit, but not that much, I think one kid had two errors and the other had 4.

The Maths Tests

Jane The shape and space one went really well and I found quite a few achieved Level 3 because the assessment was quite simple and straight forward. . . . The one that caused the most problems initially was the Maths 3 which was the dice game. This is where they had to know and recall number facts. People were wondering how long they should delay before they actually say the answer. So if you throw the dice and, say, it was three and two, then how long would you let them go before they would answer. Pauline seemed to think it was just a few seconds, you see, but I added a bit more. I mean, they've got to register the numbers first, and if the dice are the wrong way round they've got to turn the numbers round because one number might be upside down. Then they go, "three

> and two - five!" As long as you don't see them going (counting with fingers). . . . there had to be no visible signs of computation.

> Patricia Level 2 was 'recall'. Level 3 was 'instant recall'. So there was the difference. Now when I was going around trying to assess people doing this, the advisor saw somebody from the NFER who set the tests who said, "Oh, don't worry dear. Don't be too hard on them if they do this a little bit. So what do you do? So what I did was, where there was a discrepancy between myself and a teacher, and there was on a couple of occasions when the teacher said, "I think she got it!" and I said, "No, I don't think that child did get that," there was a maths sheet that went with it, a pupil sheet, quite difficult with money problems on it, and they fell on the sheet if I thought they'd failed on the recall, basically. So that sorted them out anyway. It didn't really matter about the recall in effect, because that was the simpler test anyway.

> Jane In fact a lot more achieved that than I initially thought would. I thought they would never be able to do that instant recall. Well, we thought it was instant recall, but now we know that it's not.

Angela and Susan experienced the same problems.

> Angela That one was a bit difficult. Where they weren't supposed to use their fingers. I think that was ridiculous because even adults use their fingers. Well, one or two, they were sort of going like that (finger counting). I just ignored that they were doing it.

Susan watched her children counting under the table and thought it showed initiative. She ignored this too. As well, Susan decided to do the Maths Game tests before Easter and commented on the guidance in the Teacher's Instruction that children should be tested in groups.

> There was a problem with that because I know two children copied. But, then again, they say you can work in a group. Alison next door put hers into groups and put one good one in each group so they all copied the good one. . . . You see, group testing is very unfair. It's the leader your testing, the rest do as they're told! . . . I didn't do it in groups of 4 because that's not a fair test. It's a complete and utter waste of time because they just copy one person. Some of them did it in two's, a lot of them did it on

> their own and I said, "You can't have the same game as the person next to you!

Pamela thought that one of the tests, anyway, depended on the luck of the draw. In the dice test, children were not allowed to use their fingers to count. But Pamela thought the difficulty of the counting depended on the throw of the dice!

> P Luck played a part in the dice game. In some cases you could have some very good throws. 2 plus 2 for instance. Yes, I would say that some of my children were particularly lucky. But that's what the rule states.
>
> R But I think you had to get five out of six.
>
> P Yes! But you could still be very lucky. One of mine was very lucky. It was like backing a horse as far as we were concerned.

The Science Tests

The test in science that caused most problems was the "floating and sinking" exercise where children had to weigh objects and assess whether they would float or sink. None of the teachers who mentioned this test were happy with their scales, complaining that they were not sensitive enough.

Patricia

> There was an inherent flaw with Science 1, it sort of carried on from part A, to Part B to Part C. In part B they could use non standard measures. In part C, they had to show the need, or had to show that they needed to use something like the kitchen scales. The finest division on those is probably 25 grams. So what a waste of time when you've got two things and a five gram differential to use a kitchen scales that will only give you a 25 gram differential. . . . so I said, "Get rid of the scale, they're not helping the kids," and I gave them one gram weights. It said, 'label to the nearest division'. Well, it's absolutely stupid. Whoever thought of that did not try it out. Because you had to have two objects that were very close in weight so that the children could actually do something with it.

> Jane A lot of objects they chose were very light, like a leaf. Well, they couldn't weigh it. . . . It showed hardly anything on the cubes. We had this balsa wood, one little cube wouldn't show anything at all on the kitchen scales.

Susan had the same problem. Her children couldn't compare an apple with a pear, and the branches she had sawn into little pieces made no impact on the scales.

I also mentioned to Jane and Patricia that at least one newspaper had reported the case of a banana that should have floated, but became soggy from continual use and resisted all efforts on the part of the child to make it float. Patricia made an interesting comment about the assessment of hypothetical arguments.

> We're already assessing knowledge. All those things were fine. Maths 1 and Science 1 are assessing the very things we can't assess. We don't know how they use and apply their knowledge, and how they investigate and hypothesise. But having said that the tests that were set actually were too vague to be able to really assess that.

Mary had problems with the floating and sinking.

> I found on the floating and sinking I was almost sinking with them. It was too much of the sameness, if you like. I had loads of problems doing it in as much as I didn't think anyone was going to achieve Level 3 science. This was my previous idea of this. I was like a child. I was so excited when they got to Level 2, but then I realised that their capabilities were not for a Level 2 . . . . but it was rather disappointing, especially in the floating and sinking. They had to weigh first, then they had to guess and it was probably an extension of Level 2. And then, when I was on cloud 9, it came to me. Differentiate between a fair and an unfair test. And they could not do it.

Angela just got fed up with the floating and sinking and didn't bother with Level 3.

> I didn't have any problems with it. I only just fitted it in and to tell you the truth, at the end of the third week I was so sick of doing it that I didn't bother with the Level 3 floating and sinking.

Would some of the children been able to do that?

> Well, they might have. But I found it very difficult to understand. And I couldn't actually see what was different between Level 3 and 2 really. I couldn't see what else the children could tell me about floating and sinking! (Laughter)

Appropriate Tests?

A number of teachers commented on the wide age differences within the Year Two classes and the effect this could have on performance. Wendy and Elaine felt that the way the assessment and tests were administered was unfair because some children were so much younger than others when they did them.

> E It is what I have been saying for a while. I think it is all very unjust really. January and February, from that time on to June, July, usually you would expect to see quite a lot of improvement, and maturing too.

In what way did Wendy and Elaine think the system was unjust?

> E You have to give a Level don't you? You have say at the end of the year. And you're basing this on something, on an assessment you've made in the Spring Term. You're talking about several months. The school year's only from September to July.
>
> R Unjust is a strong word. How were the results going to be used?
>
> E Well, they're going to be given to parents and I think they're misleading.

Pamela had strong views about the inappropriateness of testing 7 year olds, especially when some of the children had been in school much longer than others. However, she believed the Summer children did not do as well in the tests and she also treated them differently in the classroom.

> There's an age problem as well. With the Summer children. Yes, some of my children are very young. They just haven't been in school long enough. I mean, the older children who are virtually juniors have a different approach to work even from my children. . . . I don't think SATs is a fair

> test. . . . They were two year infants. We didn't have any great aspirations for them anyway because they just hadn't covered the work.

Because some had been there longer than others?

> Yes! And we had the opportunity to look at the class who had been in school longer and we felt that if they were going to be doing the same things we must give more to the children who had been in school longer because they were going to be doing better. And they did. It was born out by what we felt.

Another criticism related to the reading level. Many teachers felt that Level 2, for example didn't discriminate enough. But Patricia and Jane were very keen on the reading exercise, even though they thought the SATs were a waste of time. Mary felt the tests were just not difficult enough, which was surprising, given the large percentage of special needs children in her class. Because there was a high level of teacher judgement and Mary admitted that she had tended to underestimate the ability of her children, did results become distorted? Were these tests really standardized? At the very least Mary had a large number of discrepancies between her assessment and testing results.

> M What I would love to see, I would love to see examples of the work of children who I know are in better class areas than ours. I would love to see how they scored on these tests. . . . I sometimes think they were designed for brighter children, solely. And then, of course, my argument goes beyond that, doesn't it, because it suited slow learners. And it's proved a point to me, quite honestly, that. . . . it catered more for those children, but I really, really think that they were too easy for good children.
>
> R Are you saying that if these tests were done in a school where there were really, really bright children in a middle class area where expectations were high, no discipline problems and hard, hard workers, that they would have breezed through these.
>
> M Easily.
>
> R But the government, the SEAC people who set these tests, said that

80% of the children around the country will achieve Level 2.

M I find that very hard to believe. The question that I ask is, "Were they fair tests for the whole country?" There are children there who have read endless books. My children can't even put a full stop. If they put a full stop it's all at the end of a line. That's as far as they can see. But there must be children there who were achieving wonderful work, but I was assessing on what they asked and my children achieved Level 2 and 3 creative writing. Now if that work was put side by side with another child's work in another area who had got a Level 3 it would be paltry.

R So there's quite a big range?

M Yes! I still can't see that those tests are standardized.

R But you think that was the purpose of the Government to compare one school with another?

M Oh, definitely. But I think that could go out of the window tomorrow. I don't think there's any need for that. Because I still think children at 7 are far too young. Again, they didn't realise it was a test, but some children in other areas do. We have to report to parents.

But despite all these criticisms, Mary still insisted that the tests were good.

> I still think that overall they were good. And I still stick to that. I'm not saying that I would like the government to devise a system for me to do this. I think it could be something local. It could be anything. It could be within a school. It doesn't have to be each school doing the same thing. I was trying to tell the staff lower down the school, it would be a good idea if they did a test of their children at the end of the year, because it changes your outlook completely on those children, absolutely.

As far as the tests in science were concerned, Mary felt they took time away from other more interesting experiments she could have done.

> If I had had that time I could have done a super topic and my topic would have been electricity, quite honestly. And I felt the children could have gained more by playing with the little boards that we've got and experimenting and doing all this sort of thing than repeating floating and

> sinking that they had already done.

So what were the good things about this?

> Nothing. Absolutely nothing. I suppose I'm trying to be positive and trying to kid myself by being rather pleased at how the children have done better than I thought. I know I keep coming back to that, but as far as I am concerned, that's the only positive thing that's come out of this.

Doreen had heard that the number of attainment targets were being cut down and the tests would be reduced.

> I don't see any point in cutting them down at all. I just want them scrapped and just do teacher assessment. I don't know how they are going to cut it down to any value.

What did Doreen think about the comparison value of the test results?

D That's ridiculous because the measures differ from one school to another; from one county to another. It's ridiculous, isn't it? My standards are not the same as somebody's down the road. So it's not standardized. . . . I mean the criteria are quite well defined, really, when you look at them, but on the other hand at one of the meetings that we went to, we were asked to bring pieces of work. We were sort of looking and saying, "What do you think this is, Level 2 or Level 3." "Oh, that's Level 2!" And I was thinking, "that's never Level 2." You know? So I think people are still learning, aren't they? But for Level 2 it does say, it's got to be two sentences.

R Some are very specific.

D Yes, they are.

R But some are less specific than others.

D Yes. I tell you the one I had difficulty with. The only one I was sort of hovering about, was one of the maths ones where there were only two statement of attainments and one of them was, "recognizes odd and even numbers." I do that. I do odd and even numbers as a class lesson from September to July. And I know that

> when I'm standing in front of that board and I'm doing this with them as a class, they all know odd and even numbers, so I put down all at Level 2. Now when it came to individual recognition of odd and even numbers, half of them didn't know them. Now, there's no way those children are Level 1. But at that particular statement of attainment, because there are only two of them, they have to achieve those two to get Level 2. And I thought, "Well, I have this dilemma. What do I do?" Because I really didn't want to put them on Level 1 because I knew they weren't Level 1 children. So it's very difficult. That's the only one I had a problem with my conscience about.

Barbara's assessments were done in a hurry. She didn't really have time to assess properly so she found herself guessing what level her children had attained in order to finish by Easter.

> They were very sketchy. I pulled figures out of the air in a lot of cases. . . . the basic things, literacy and maths, you could easily gain what they know, what they can do in a couple of weeks. But for the science it was impossible to know how much they knew in all those subjects. So it literally was - a guess!

Pamela made the same point:

> I couldn't see why we should have a teacher assessment and a SAT. I think we should have had a SAT and no teacher assessment. I couldn't see why we had to guess what they were *going* to do and then find out what they *could* do.

Barbara was one of the teachers I worked with who admitted that her assessments were not based on work done in the classroom. I asked her why she did this. After a long silence she commented:

> I couldn't put my children through a situation where they had been in class but hadn't been through the system. Also, I didn't know what would happen to me if I didn't do it.

Angela, however, also felt she was being rushed through a curriculum she was unfamiliar with and she disagreed with the teachers who felt that their science teaching had improved because of the demands of the National Curriculum.

A Myself and the other teachers feel that we're just trying to get all the things that are in there in and that we're not actually covering them very well. . . . particularly when we were doing the assessing. We were panicking and thinking, "Oh dear! We haven't done that, Oh. Dear! We haven't done this. . . . What we did, we went through the topics and divided the science into three and during the year we covered levels 1 and 2. We didn't bother with 3.

R Why?

A Because we were having a job to fit 1 and 2 into the year.

R Would the children in your class have been able to do Level 3?

A Well, possibly. But there again, I think it is an impossible thing to try and achieve - to teach all children at different levels.

Susan couldn't cover all the work either.

S With some of the things you had to add up all of those attainment targets and the children aren't tested on every attainment target, say, maths and science. I felt I had to top them up to be fair.

R What do you mean, "top them up?"

S Well, I had filled my Sandwell records in at Christmas. What the children had done up until that time. Then I filled them in at half term. But then there was another half term to fill in. Now, I wouldn't normally do that until the Summer perhaps. But I had to go through and fill them in again.

R How did you feel about the science? Could you visit all the science?

S No! Our attainment targets are planned so that some are covered in Middle and some in Tops. Now we do these in topics. Now, some of the topics I had done. Say the topics for the Summer Term, there are things like, "moving things", "how things work" and "playing with air". Now I don't teach that until the Summer Term, so how could I shade it in? . . . So those are left blank because they haven't been taught yet.

R But then, when you come to do the SATs some are related to your teacher assessment and you wouldn't have had anything to compare them with, right? . . . You've filled out some as working towards, but they haven't done it, right?

S Yes!

R So it's a bit misleading?

S Yes.

Susan admitted that if she had tried to do the job as thoroughly as possible so that the grades she gave were fairly accurate. However, she knew of at least one teacher who wasn't so diligent.

> Well, I've got this friend of mine. She . . . it's quite a good school . . . she shaded everybody with Level 2. she said, "sod this" and shaded the lot in at Level 2 and she did the tests and the ones she thought were alright she let them throw the dice until they were up or down to exactly what she thought.

What did Susan think about this?

> I thought it was very good because I knew the school. And I know those kids are pretty good. Out of a class of 32 she had 10 Level 3's. Well, she might have had a few more in everything. She thought, "What's the point in wasting all this time?" But in a school like that you can do that, but in a school like ours it takes ages to test the children..

Susan frequently mentioned the difficulty of testing in a school such as hers. When I asked her about the reliability of the testing process she became quite agitated. Susan had done a number of her tests before Easter despite instructions to the contrary.

S I shouldn't be saying this on the tape.

R Well, what is the purpose of having everybody doing it at the same time all around the country? What's the reason for that Susan?

S Well, you've got to standardize things, haven't you? Make it an equal, fair test - that everyone is doing a fair test around the same time.

R But do you think it was a fair test?

S Oh, No! You know what our's are like. They go home for a couple of weeks over Easter and some of them wouldn't have spoken English for a couple of weeks and they need a few days to get back plus the fact, it was Ede, wasn't it - the end of Ramadan, just after Easter? One is at the end of Ramadan and one is at the end of the pilgrimage to Mecca. So we had half the class away when we came back.

R How long for?

S For that first week.

R So for the whole of the first week they were out for Ramadan. End of Ramadan. How many children out of 29 speak English at home?

S Five

R So the majority don't speak English and certainly not over Easter.

S That's right.

R So, in fact, to test them before Easter was quite logical really.

S Yes! Well, some of it. The first day back I had nine children. Now you know this clever plan they'd got where they had grouped it for you - which was ridiculous. Well, I had all of my groups worked out but then, of course, when I went to test them, none of them were there. So as for this planning. It was a complete waste of time. They trickled back. But having said that, it suited me fine to have only 9 children. Oh yes! Because I could test them easier. I mean, here was the Head complaining about the timing but there are two ways of looking at that. From my point of view it was great. The Head didn't have to do the testing!

R As far as doing the tests before Easter, if you don't believe that there is any standardization around the country - all things are not equal amongst children and teachers around the country, does it matter? What do you think about this?

S Well, I think there has to be some standardization. There needs to be a final date when you can test things. You can't test things around the year. A better time would have been mid-summer term. Not the end, mid term. The end of May - June - towards half term and just before you are going to do your reports.

Pamela was one of the teachers who felt that there was too much teacher involvement in the testing process and this could lead to bias.

P I think that in a small school teacher's knowledge of the children is too great. . . . I know, myself, that I would have given a child longer to think about something if I thought that the answer might be there.

R Would most teachers do that?

P Yes! That's what's wrong with it. You're too involved with the children. You want them to do well. And give them a bit longer. If you think it's there. . . . You don't want them to seem a failure. That's what I've got against the SATs. . . . There's too much teacher involvement. Because you're . . . not being honest. You're still heavily involved in testing them, and your input can make the difference between what they find in a test and what they don't find in a test. Especially in the science. If you sat with a group you could give an awful lot of input.

Test Construction

Patricia and Jane were critical of the people who devised the tests.

P I don't know where they got their ideas from because they're already giving out information as to the evaluation of the SATs before ever having asked anyone.

J There are obviously committees organised, aren't there? Set up to deal with these issues.

P But they're not necessarily teachers.

J But they're not. And this is what I find. There might be a committee there talking about this assessment, and none of them, or maybe one of them, twenty years ago, taught in a Primary School. And this is where the difficulty is. They've got no idea, I think, of what goes on today in a Primary school with six and seven year olds. They have an ideal situation. This is the ideal, yes. We can do this and we can do that, this could be done and that could be done and that's the ideal situation. But the ideal situation very rarely exists.

P This had been billed as a National Trial, therefore if it is a trial and there's a proper evaluation then changes should be made. Basically, I think the Year 2 teachers want the 32 TA's scaled down because it was far too many. It was ridiculous.

Angela complained about the selection of the reading books and felt that whoever had chosen them had no knowledge of infants.

> Whoever chose those books had never actually taught infants. They didn't even know an infant. I thought they had gone into a book shop and picked up books for Level 1 that looked like a child's book but they hadn't actually looked at the vocabulary because some of the vocabulary in those, you know, it had a big picture and one line - therefore it was an easy reading book! I felt, I mean, one of them had the word fragile, which, for a Level 1 reader, they were very difficult.

Pamela complained that right from the start the teachers' weren't consulted about either the National Curriculum or the tests.

R Have you ever felt that you were part of the consultative process?

P No! At no time.

R When the curriculum were devised, the NCC sent out discussion documents. You've had them in the schools. They're not finished documents. All of them had proposals which were discussed at length by university lecturers and all sorts of people. Were you aware at any time that you were perfectly free to write and say what you thought?

P Oh Yes! We did! Oh Yes! Our school did write. The post holder who was looking at that particular area had meetings and we put our feelings on it. At every single available opportunity we said this was not appropriate for infant children. This is not good infant practice. It will be wasting our time. We don't wish to do it. And it was totally ignored. Because the people who were writing the National Curriculum don't really know what, who, they are writing for.

R So why were you ignored? Were you the only people saying these things?

P Oh No! I'm sure lots of people were saying it.

R So why were you ignored? If there's a consultative process but you're saying it's there but it doesn't work, or at least that the teacher's voice isn't being heard. Other voices are stronger than mine . . . what's the point of the consultative process?

P I think that unless you're involved in the teaching you forget all too quickly as you get older, exactly what children of 5 and 6 and 7 need to know. I think they forget! And people's pasts. They think back to their own pasts and when their reflections of their own pasts are not what really happened but what they think should have happened, I don't think it's quite the same.

R So what you're saying really is that the people who are constructing the curricula are not in touch with what's going on in teaching?

P No!

Jenny expressed much the same feelings.

> It was alright to say we think this should be done. It had obviously been done by people whose knowledge of how the infant child mind works and how infant teachers worked and how the school day goes was very limited. I don't think that many of them had been in school recently.

Jenny also made an observation drawn from her own experience about how planning can quite easily be divorced from reality.

J Well, I equate in a way, as far as the planning of the powers that be, if for any reason I've had any time off and I'm sitting here and I've got my planning for my class, I very soon forget what their true capabilities are. I get carried away with what I would like them to able to do, and I think that's what's happened to a certain extent with this. People who've been doing it have not really thought what you are really capable of delivering or what your children are really capable of achieving within a set time. They've gone overboard and thought, "We'd like them to do this and we'd like them to do that," forgetting that there is a limit that can be done in any set period of time.

R But SEAC assured me, when I was speaking to them there, that practising teachers are involved in developing this.

J Well, yes! But, it sounds a bit like knocking it, but I've got to do it, either they are out to impress or they're afraid to say, "Hang on a minute!" It's very easy to forget when you're out of the classroom and carried along by what other people have been doing. It's happened to me on other occasions and I'm sure it must have happened because, the area that I'm in, Telford, is a fairly poor area but we've got some really good kids who work hard and achieve a fairly high level.

Value of the Tests

Jane I just think the whole thing is a waste of time.

Patricia

It's not telling us anything new. I think we always need to assess reading so if there are any special needs problems we can highlight them. We always do it anyway. It would be nice to do it nationally. It would be quite useful. It would be no problem. They can all write for half an hour, you can take it home and assess it in you own time.

I wanted to know if Patricia and Jane had learned anything about assessing.

P Yes, a lot! About the number of criteria you can assess at any one time. Being more specific about what you're actually assessing. Setting up the activities so you are assessing what you want to assess.

Did Patricia or Jane think they could have learned this in a less stressful kind of way?

J Yes! If the importance of teacher assessment had really been brought to the fore. . . . if that was made the important issue and then we were taught exactly how to assess, or given some tips on how to do it now.

P It's making us focus more on the attainment targets, so particularly with algebra which is quite a difficult one, she (the advisor) wrote it out in huge sheets and split us into three groups and wrote down what we would expect a child to do to show a particular level of achievement. And then she spoke on how we would use that in our assessment program. So, really it's making us absolutely focussed on what we are doing.

Were teachers going to be better trained at assessment now?

P You don't know whether this information is actually going back to the training colleges. . . . But they're certainly using the documents.

How much were Patricia and Jane still using outside tests?

P I'm quite cross, actually, because we're using the NFER this year. I don't think we need to. We're assessing against National Curriculum, so why bring in something else.

R How long did that take.

P It's dead simple, because you sit them all down and it's done by break. It's standardized as a raw score against their age. So you get a pretty good idea. . . . But I would rather adopt something along the line of the SAT reading test because I think that's better.

Both Jane and Patricia agreed that before the SATs the type and quantity of reading tests varied from school to school and from teacher to teacher. Jane, for example only used external tests before the children left the Infants and these were obligatory. Why did Patricia think that the NFER tests were still being used? Was it because there was no confidence in the SATs?

> It probably is, because they're using them lower down. It would be interesting to compare, because, having said we're going to go Level 1, 2 or 3, I mean Level 2 is like that (very wide), so it's probably going to give a more specific idea.

Some teachers felt that they learned more about their quiet children, but Patricia and Jane disagreed.

> P Well, I always work in groups.
>
> J I don't think that was true of me either.

Like many of the teachers, Mary had mixed views on the tests. On the one hand she believed that the SATs had helped her realise the true potential of some of her students, on the other hand she disliked the tests and felt that should be "nipped in the bud". Mary believed that the tests should be abandoned, and was very unhappy about doing them next year. What did she like about them?

> Basically, I think the idea of a SAT was good. It helped me realise after all of this the children's true potential. I had terribly underestimated them. I think it gave me a fairer picture of what those children could achieve. In a school like ours, for example, where we've got a high percentage of children with special needs, they performed admirably and that is one of the things I would comment on most. Because the maths one was mechanical, where they worked with counters, most of my children are beyond that. I tried to say, well, you've got fingers, if they're desperate, you know. But I try and get them to work in their minds. But the slow learners were achieving more than I expected, because they were able to use counters and it was quite 'simple'. The same applied with science actually. Science 1 was oral. Describe this, the objects that we had, and they were O.K. Now, I put one child as working towards Level 1 and he got Level 2. A slow learner. Now if you had asked me this before the SATs, my teacher assessment would have been working towards level 1, because whenever we did science he would sit there and say nothing and wouldn't contribute, but on a one to one question basis, on a specific topic, which it was, I mean these materials, there was only one question you could ask, you know, "Describe the materials." O.K.? So from that aspect I was pleased with

the outcome. Overall, I would say, the initial tests were too simple, that some of the Level 3 ones were too intense on too narrow a subject.

Wendy and Elaine had mixed feelings about the value of the tests. I asked them if anything good had come out of the tests. After a long silence they replied

E I think we've already mentioned, being released to work with small groups. I mean, that was a luxury for me. That was great. Therefore, they actually probably achieved more. Conditions were favourable. In that sense, some of them had a chance to develop. Some of the activities, they were fine. I wasn't too happy about them as assessment activities.

R Did the children directly benefit then?

E That depends on whether undivided attention's a good thing or not.

Wendy said that she had not found out anything from the tests that she would not have known before. Elaine disagreed.

E Because they were able to work in small groups then I did find out and some children did surprise me a bit, pleasantly.

What about discrepancies between teacher assessment and SATs?

E Not a lot. Just some. It was mainly that they did a bit better than I thought they would. I was just thinking, though. If we start assessing in September, if we assess and say, that's it, and put it down as a level. If we do, then, test, there's going to be a vast difference six months later.

W I don't see how else we can do it and keep our normal classroom situation going.

E But then we're going to have even more a discrepancy than we did this year, I think. Otherwise, we'll have to guess ahead and think, "Oh, well, we'll put her down for a 2, she should be 2 by the Summer. It's getting ridiculous.

W I do think it leads to people just putting an arbitrary number. I

> would be surprised if a lot of people haven't done that!

Why would they do that?

> W Because I think they would want to get everything done in time.

Was there anything else that they liked about the tests? Wendy thought the science assessment and tests were similar to what she would do normally.

> I think some of the science things were nice to do. But it's nothing that we don't do anyway. We have a reasonable science program going. We work in groups. We have the children in small groups for science anyway. . . . We do different activities with groups of, say 12, where they're all sort of quite actively engaged. . . . We're working to the attainment targets, we're thinking up activities for them to do within the attainment targets, so there's nothing in there we aren't doing anyway.

Susan added her voice to the teachers who thought the tests were a waste of time.

> R So you didn't find out anything you didn't already know?
>
> S That's right.
>
> R So I surmise from that that if you had not put them through all of this you probably could have sat down and had a pretty good stab.
>
> S Yes! I could have filled them all before I started. Yes!
>
> R But you didn't?
>
> S No.
>
> R So you chose not to. You chose to actually go through all the procedure. I know you said you wouldn't do it again.
>
> S Well, yes! But you're always wiser after the event. If I knew what was coming up on the SATs and how it was going to go I wouldn't have bothered. . . . If I have to do them again - everything - I shall be more casual. I won't take the thing so seriously - or worry about it - or invest all the time I did invest. It was all new to me and I thought, really, I must be familiar with every aspect of it - have it all at my fingertips so I don't make any mistakes. It was silly.

Although Susan believed the SATs were a waste of time, she thought that testing was an important feature of her teaching day. She also felt that the way tests had been administered in the past was satisfactory.

S	We have had testing in as far as every school had done their own testing. Every school I've been in the children have been tested every year. Usually the NFER or something like that. English tests and maths tests. Although all schools haven't done the same tests. So I suppose it would be a good idea to bring them all into line.
R	Teachers test all the time don't they?
S	Oh Yes! But you can get situations, particularly in Sandwell where standards were very poor, and where the kids were told, "Oh, they were doing very well," and all that sort of thing. Then they found out they couldn't do their 'O' Levels.
R	So you think testing is a good thing?
S	I don't mean formal testing. But I think parents should have an indication of a child. If a child is up to standard. I think we have had in the past, at some schools, and these are probably ethnic schools, where the kids have come home with glowing reports, and the parents believe they're doing really well academically. In fact they are not.
R	How do you determine the standard?
S	Well, I think you can determine the reading age, can't you? That's straight forward. And the same with writing - pretty straight forward. But the maths is a little more difficult.
R	So you think it is possible to devise a fair and reasonable test?
S	Well, no! Well, you don't even have to have tests. If you have a National Curriculum you know what kids should do. You know, kids in the top juniors should be able to do long division, this sort of thing, decimals, fractions. You know what they should be able to do. And if that is down there you know what kids should do at that age.

R Do you think that every child should be doing the same test at the same time around the country?

S No! I don't think it needs to be tested formally. But I think it could be left to teachers. I think we should have a National Curriculum actually. Well, some of it's absurd. I don't know who's drawn it up.

R Yes! But there is a framework there and people feel there is a flexibility within it - that you can still be a professional teacher within it. But, I'm interested in what you have said about testing.

S Well, the testing isn't fair. They only test a certain number of things on the SATs and it's not a fair reflection is it?

R Well, how would you set it up if you were doing it?

S Well, I think the English isn't bad. It just needs to be sorted out a bit. It isn't that far out. You need a preliminary level. Reading only has to be changed a bit. The maths - well, there is a lot of formal testing at a young age. It doesn't take into account that children do more practical maths tasks. It is rather formal from an early age. But I think we should be able to draw up a program of what children should be able to do at a certain age.

I asked Susan whether she thought the National Curriculum and the accompanying testing would raise standards.

> It might, eventually. I don't know. But this is the worst class I have ever had and the worst class for reading and everything and that's because they supposedly started the National Curriculum a year before they came up to me. But the teacher said "We haven't had time to do all of this - we've been doing all the science!" And they gave science projects and children couldn't read. . . . You can only push kids so far. There's only so many hours in the day and only so much you can teach.

Pamela also felt that testing was not necessarily a bad thing.

R Can you describe to me the kind of testing you would like to see as opposed to what this is?

P I would like a reading test. Very similar to this one.

R So you liked the reading test?

P Yes! If we were given the books which we didn't have. We only had three. In our school we do a very similar test anyway.

I asked Pamela what she thought about the league tables and the tests being used to compare one school with another. After a long silence she replied:

P This is difficult because you've got to take into account areas where the children already come into school prepared.

R Well, what kind of school are you in?

P I'm in a very middle class school where I would say half our children come in already reading - to some degree. And, have had some reading experience. But I've also taught in another school in the borough where they come in and have a job remembering who they are. Their speech is not there and they would obviously . . . our children, obviously . . . it's a good test for them. They look good. They perform well, which you wouldn't get in another school.

R So yours is a high performing school.

P Yes! . . .

R I think what will show up and what is showing up is that where poverty is greatest reading levels will be lower.

Useful for parents?

One of the goals of the testing exercise was to provide National comparisons for parents.

P I don't see why we need it if there's a National Curriculum. I can see a few years ago when we weren't following anything, it was very difficult for me to relate my child who was good at maths with someone else's child who was good at maths because we weren't assessing against the same criteria. Now we're assessing against the same criteria.

J We should have a National Profile really.

P We know where we are, so there's no need for these tests.

J I really feel there should be a National Profile. They gave us a National Curriculum and then every school has got a different method of profiling and if a child moves from one school to another it sometimes makes it harder instead of easier because they have different ways of recording.

Why did Jane and Patricia think the government didn't introduce National Profiling?

P They didn't have time. I think there would have been a lot of opposition.

J I don't think there would have been.

P The Unions would have opposed it.

J Schools have to spend an awful lot of time working out these profiles.

P Provided it came from the teachers up and it wasn't information disseminated from them down and some hoped that we might change it when they had already decided.

J I mean, some are more extensive than others, aren't they. A sheet for maths, a sheet for language and a sheet for science so far. But some schools have got wads on science. Ours is fairly simple and straightforward.

P Well you get down to the end of the day, all I want to know of my children coming home is, "Here, this child is about average of so."

Many of these profiles and record of progress were very lengthy. Who read them?

J I would have to look to see who are my Level 1's. Otherwise it would take me a few weeks to work that out. . . . but in my school

I'd probably go and ask the previous teacher before I'd look at the profile.

P You only look at the most up to date information. Never mind what they did at five.

J We don't write anything down now about personality. You've got to be so careful now what you actually say about the child, because of the parents. You're not allowed to make any observations which are not directly related to how they are working. You can't say, "this child's come from a broken home and this is why his work is probably suffering."

Mary believed that her parents would not understand the complexity of the testing process.

> Now, our parents will understand, 1, 2, 3, but they wouldn't understand the comments. Why has he only had 1 when someone else has had 3. They'll understand that.

Wendy and Elaine thought the Level 2 statement was misleading because it covered such a broad range of ability. How did they think parents would react to the results?

E If they know there's Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3, I think they'll be bitterly disappointed if they're not Level 3. I will try to sort of think of the idea that most children will be Level 2. I will try and plant that idea in their heads before they actually get the results. I don't want to disappoint them. I don't want them to be disappointed in their children either. And I don't actually know until it happens what the reaction will be.

What did they think about the wide range of Level 2?

E This is the main complaint in the report I wrote. . . . I shall have to say to the parents, "She's a pretty good Level 2".

W Well, we will (laughing). "She's worked really hard and she's just managed to get Level 2!" I should think that most of our parents, if their children has got Level 2 will be quite happy with that.

E They will when they see that I'm smiling and saying, "Didn't she do well!"

So how would they deal with the children who got Level 1?

E Oh, I shan't enjoy that one at all.

Would parents view Level 1 as a failure?

E If they're late developers, or if they're very immature, or if they're Summer birthdays, or are not bright, then the hope is, that the next time they're tested they'll do so brilliantly well that you'll say to the teacher, "Look how she's come on!"

But if a child just achieves Level 2 at Key Stage 1 and then they go into the next year, they may not have achieved Level 3 even by the end of the next year. Parents will say, "Well, they were on Level 2 last year." What did Wendy and Elaine think about that. Would it be a problem?

E I think it might well be.

W Because some of the children could achieve part of Level 3, if there was maybe 5 achievements in Level 3, they would do maybe 3 but they wouldn't achieve Level 3.

Doreen thought she might get complaints from parents.

> Out of 32 children I've only got one Level 1. . . . The Level 2 band is incredibly wide. It's about two years wide. I mean, I'm putting people down who are just reaching it and some other children who are almost on Level 3. It isn't fair really.

But would the parents get better information because of the SATs?

> You're advised when you write their reports to put down the Levels and the profile component. Now if they don't ask me, I'm not going to say much about it. What I'll do, if somebody says, "What do they have to do achieve to have Level 2?" Then, I'll get the documents out.

How did Doreen resolve the dilemma of the odds and evens?

> I put them at 2. Because I did it again and again and again with them until the end. . . . The parents won't know I did that.

Susan had particular problems in her school because many of her parents neither read nor spoke English. How useful were the test results for them?

> As it is now, at the parent's afternoon they'll be given the reports on the afternoon and they won't be able to make head nor tale of it. . . . the parents that will come, they'll be mothers. They'll have a trail of children behind them and they won't be able to make any sense of it. Some of them will, but if they went out a week before hand older brothers and sisters, some of the fathers - a lot of fathers can read English - they've been brought up here and got a wife brought over from Bangladesh who can't speak any English. They could digest it and come and talk about it. It'll be a waste of time as far as the parents are concerned, except for a few parents.

Would the parents who could read understand the test results?

> S Quite honestly, I don't know. Nowhere on the report . . . it's got Level 1, 2 or 3 . . . does it say what they mean.
>
> R I think at some stage the idea is that you would explain that to them.
>
> S Well, no arrangements have been made for that.

I asked Susan if the parents would worry if they discovered that their children were at Level 1.

> R Do you think any of them would go around the street saying, "Yours is Level 1 and yours is Level 2?"
>
> S Well, I think it would take a few weeks.
>
> R For them to understand that their child was Level 1?
>
> S Yes!

Pamela was convinced that parents would complain as soon as they realised how little the tests revealed.

> P I think that they're going to realise when they get the report how little they know. They thought they were going to know a lot more and I think when they get the reports that they know no more than they knew last year.
>
> R And then what will they do, do you think?
>
> P Absolutely nothing because they're apathetic.

Problems with Teacher Assessment

A number of teachers commented on the fact that they were obliged to assess children on attainment targets in, for example, science, even if they had not covered the work. The main problem was that the assessment had to be completed by the end of March, even though the school year continued until the end of July.

> E I had to put down Level 1 because I hadn't done the work involved with that assessment and wouldn't be able to do it there and then before March 31st in about five topics I hadn't covered. They might have been at Level 2 and when it came to doing the overall profiling this did show because it dropped the level down.

Doreen, who was not happy with keeping the SATs, felt that assessment should be retained.

> We're still talking about Levels, aren't we? I don't like them but I think they're here from the age of 5 - 16 and they won't disappear because they're part of the National Curriculum. . . . I don't really mind that.

What distinction did Doreen make between teacher assessment and SATs?

> You're giving them unrelated little pieces of work. And they come out at the same level as you've already assessed them. There was no discrepancy and it was a waste of time. . . . It's a shame at seven to do that.

Jenny had a different perspective on the assessment process. Her head teacher was anxious that the school appeared to be performing well so she encouraged her teacher to tick boxes with enthusiasm whether they were an accurate assessment or not!

J We adopted, like a lot of the County did, a tick sheet which covered the whole curriculum, one that the Head had seen in the Child Ed. or somewhere and she had adapted it. Boxes for all the attainment targets for Levels up to 4.

R Were you pleased with it?

J No!

R Why not?

J Because it was meaningless. You can tick anything. As we have proved since we've done the SATs; as we have proved, my colleague and I, as we have done the actual assessment and looking back over all these we found that with the best will in the world teachers of children at Year 1 had already filled out Level 3. And yet, as a Year Two teacher I knew those children hadn't achieved Level 3. I was giving them a teacher assessment at Level 2 for things their last year's teacher had put them at Level 3.

R So why do you think this happened?

J Because no-one quite knew how they should be filled in. The Head didn't really know but she wanted lot's of ticks.

R Why was that do you think?

J Because it looked good. It looked as if it had all been done and everybody was achieving things.

Pamela appeared concerned about the recording system she had been obliged to undertake and went on to speak about it at length.

R You said . . . that recording didn't serve the purpose. What do you think the purpose was?

P Well, the original purpose was that you could see when you were doing your planning the areas that you were covering and if you missed anything it would be obvious at a glance. Well, the way we understood it in the first place we were using it, we were filling it when we were doing our planning, so we were putting an oblique stroke if you thought that your theme would cover Attainment Target 3, Level 1 whatever. We were doing that. Well, then it became clear that we were to have ongoing records of that minute detail for the assessment, then we suddenly realised that wasn't how we were supposed to be filling them in, and we tried to say, we've got to rethink this. The way we were doing this is useless. We shouldn't fill anything in until the end of each term so that we can see what the children have achieved. Well, by that time some people were genuinely confused and some people were still filling it in during the planning stage. Some people were putting spots and leaving it blank and it got hopelessly out of hand.

R Well, I don't see how you could record simultaneously working towards and covered.

P No! You couldn't!

R What did you feel about the fact that you were being asked to deal with this? Given that the Government prescribed in some detail the National Curriculum and the SATs but had not prescribed this in any detail and has not provided for you a means whereby you can all do it. In a very simple and clear way. I mean, they have enormous resources to do that. So why do you think they didn't do that?

P I've no idea. It would seem to me that if you were going to set anything like that up then you ought, alongside it, have a system of recording it. To leave it open so that each authority could, if it got its act together, say, as some authorities did, I understand, this is how we want you to do it. I've got friends in other authorities and they've said, "Oh! We haven't got that. We've been provided with this." We had nothing. Even within the County you can have all these different ways of recording it.

R Well, schools, if the authority doesn't do its own recording sheets, the school can go ahead and do it's own recording sheets and if the school doesn't like the authority's sheets they're under no obligation to use them. There was an enormous amount of duplication of work as far as I can see.

P There was!

R I want to try and get to the bottom of why it was that the Government chose to leave some things up to the authority, some things up to the teacher but other things not left up to you at all. Like, some things - you do that in this day at that time and you deliver this. Some things were heavily prescribed and others weren't. Did you think about that at all?

P Yes! It was discussed at length each time a new document or new bit of paper came into school and it was given us and we had to think about this and think about that. You do this! You do that! And yet, we were floundering really.

R So what's your feeling about that?

P I was angry about it quite honestly.

R I mean, do you think it was a Government oversight or do you think it was quite deliberate?

P I can't believe that it was an oversight. Because if you're going to be so prescriptive and say this has got to be done by March 31st on this sheet. OK! How do we do it? Exactly what do you want? Because, just flipping on a minute, when we actually got hold of the SATs and we looked at them, we realised . . . that our criteria were far more nitpicking if you like than the SATs criteria. The SATs were far easier. So most of the children levelled out at 2. Not because we were putting in 2, 2, 2, 2, 2, - willy nilly - but because we were being harder on them. And then, when they came to do the SATs, particularly the science, they've got 3's quite easily.

R But next year you will be the wiser for this?

P Only on those SATs that we've had. Somebody said that to me today, but I said, but if we are only going to be doing a limited number each year, then it's going to be a number of years before we've done enough to be able to say, well, we now know what they

> are looking for. I think perhaps they didn't really know how it was going to work.

Views about the National Curriculum

Most of the teachers felt that their children were learning more science, but this was because of the National Curriculum, not the SATs.

> Jane I think the National Curriculum is a good thing. It does give you the . . . topics to work from. I'm not decrying that at all. I think that we did need something like that, and I think it has helped quite a lot. But why they can't just rely on your judgement, how you assess, rather than have to do all this testing. I really feel it's a total and utter waste of time. . . . I just think it's a waste of the six weeks. I could have covered more of the science, so now, I'm really behind with the science.

The government's inspectors had reported that, on the whole, schools were following the National Curriculum, so what was the point of the tests if nothing was being missed?

> Patricia
>
> I think it's stupid. You can't miss anything, because it's all embracing anyway. You'd have to watch for two years to spot things that were missing because there are rolling programs going on all the time."

Sophie also believed that the National Curriculum was not the problem. Pressure of assessment and testing was what caused the grief.

> I don't think the National Curriculum worries people so much because actually a lot of positive things have come out of it. The bugbear is the assessment and the records of achievement which is so phenomenally time consuming. When they're telling you to keep three pieces of work per core subject per term per child and annotate it, well, Christ, that's hours of work and write written reports. You don't get paid for them. I mean, you don't get overtime. You do trips, you've swimming galas.
>
> Ann You have to do that at the weekends, don't you?

Susan believed the science curriculum would help her girls.

> It was good for the girls. It has addressed the minds to the fact that science was an important feature of school right from and early age.

I wondered whether Susan thought the National Curriculum would have been adopted so readily by teachers if there was no accompanying assessment and testing.

R Supposing you had just introduced the National Curriculum.

S Yes.

R And not worried about the rest - the testing. Do you think the teachers would have taken the science so seriously?

S Oh Yes! Because then it would have been teacher assessed and it would have had to go on the girls' records as well as the boys and you would have to teach them equally. They would get the same chance.

R So you think they would have done it if the teacher assessment was obligatory. You see, one the ideas I have is that if they had not brought in the SATs for instance, this was the external measure of your success - you can tell me whether you think it was the teachers' success of children's success - I mean, I think some teachers feel it's their success.

S Yes!

The National Curriculum received a great deal of support from teachers in this study. Jenny, the last teacher I talked with in June gave her insight as to why she thought the government had introduced the National Curriculum through legislation. Many of her comments demonstrate the conflicts and contradictions teachers faced in dealing with the curriculum policies.

R So you think there should be a National Curriculum?

J No! I don't!

R	Oh, you don't think there should be one of those either?

J	No, I don't. No. No. I suppose, because I'm saying I was doing it right before. The National Curriculum has focussed our minds on the fact that even in Infant education we have got make sure that we deliver a wider area in depth of subjects. You just can't go back and say, well, they've only got to have a basic education. So, it's made us realise. But, having said that, a lot of us were already doing science. Science was inbuilt. I didn't call it science. But it was in my planning. History was in my planning. Geography was in my planning. And I'm not on my own. It was with most of us. But the National Curriculum has made us realise we were already doing it.

R	Why do you think the government felt they had to legislate it? They've never legislated anything like this before.

J	I think they were under pressure from various areas. I don't know who. But I feel there was a certain amount of pressure to say that there's too much free and easiness in our schools. These teachers are pleasing themselves what they do and maybe there were schools around the country where things weren't doing too well. And, also, it was a backlash at the 60's and 70's where such a lot of initiatives were being floated and taken on board in a lot of schools in a lot of areas and somewhere along the way they felt the time had come to stop it.

R	Who put them under pressure?

J	I don't really know because all the people I would have thought would have been demanding from the Conservatives send their children to private schools. There may well have been some, say, pressure within the party I suppose, we need to get back to basics. I agree with that in some ways. There was a lot of airy fairiness which I never agreed with. A lot of bandwagons that people jumped on to make a name for themselves, get themselves known, get a bit of promotion, that weren't doing children any good. But a lot of good things have come out of education, that teachers themselves have initiated, and proved to work. Control. Very political isn't it? Control. It was all part of this need to be controlling what was going on.

R Do you think they have succeeded?

J No, I don't!

Jenny identified one of the major issues for teachers in this study, the control over teacher's work. In the next section I will examine what teachers had to say about power, control, professionalism and unions.

Issues of Power, Control, Professionalism and Unions

The amount of work that the Government's testing policy generated caused considerable stress amongst the teachers with whom I talked. However, most of them had been teaching for many years and only one of them was working on a temporary contract. What caused these teachers to work so hard, despite the fact that their jobs were not in jeopardy and their own teacher unions had concluded that the work load was excessive? What made these teachers ignore union advice and undertake assessment and testing tasks which both encroached on their personal time at home and on their normal school work?

Teachers' views of what it meant to be a professional were inextricably linked with their attitudes towards their work, the Government and their unions. However, in most cases the issue of professionalism was raised in a tangential way. Teachers found different ways of justifying their actions, often actions that belied their personal beliefs. A common observation was that teachers hated failing. Teachers also felt that they couldn't complain about something until they had tried it. As far as the NUT boycott was concerned, teachers felt it was ill-timed. They had already put in a good deal of work and were not about to sabotage it.

Each of the teachers in this study belonged to a union. In England and Wales there is a choice of belonging to four different unions. However, as membership of a union is not a requirement for teaching in the U.K., teachers also have the choice of not joining any. The teachers I spoke to either belonged to the National Union of Teachers (NUT), the National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT), or the Assistant Master and Mistresses Association (AMMA). AMMA recently changed its name to the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL). None of the teachers I spoke with belonged to the smallest union, the Professional Association of Teachers (PAT). Only PAT has an absolute ban on strike action. The NUT has a provision for industrial action but does not require its members to follow union advice. AMMA had, until recently, a policy of not striking, but that position has soften over the last five years. The NASUWT has always provided for the possibility of strikes. Under Thatcher's Conservative Government the rules for taking industrial action were tightened. Unions must ballot their members through an independent body before they can go on strike. If the Executive of the NASUWT advises its members to take action after a ballot, non-compliance can result in expulsion from the union. Members are aware of this provision when they join.

During the time of this study all the teacher unions were actively campaigning to mitigate those aspects of the Government's policies that most affected their teachers. Additional work load was always the most prominent issue followed closely by the issue of unworkable and unreliable tests, the publication of test results, the content of the National Curriculum, lack of consultation with teachers and their unions over education policy and especially testing and assessment and, more recently, teacher evaluation and performance pay.

Many of these issues were related to another aspect of the Government's policy, local management of schools (LMS). The thrust of the Government's policy in the area of school management was to reduce the control local authorities had on financing of schools and turn this over to the school managers themselves. This initiative has been especially controversial because of its implications for funding. The formulas that were applied to determine the level of funding were often insufficient to pay for essential services such as teachers and materials. We have already seen in the study how many teachers were experiencing difficulty in acquiring the necessary resources for the testing program and how class size was growing. However, there is also the issue of control.

The general perception from education and political commentators has been that the Government wanted to decentralize education because it distrusted local authorities, the majority of whom have been Labor controlled. However, the delivery of the Government's testing and assessment procedures had been left largely in the hands of local authorities who were given the task of training their advisors and teachers. Although the authorities sent representatives to national training days, there was no cohesive plan for putting the testing and assessment policy in place. Thus, teachers often found themselves "floundering" because of the fragmented way in which policy implementation was devised. In many ways this gave teachers some considerable control over the assessment and testing process. But this did not necessarily create comfortable conditions for teachers as the previous section demonstrated.

Teacher Unions in the UK always hold their annual conferences at Easter time. In 1991 these were to prove especially fractious. Prior to the annual conference all the teacher unions, including PAT which had a history of non-militancy, issued a joint directive to teachers regarding the upcoming tests and their potential work-load. By that time the unions were already aware that the assessments and tests were time consuming because firstly they had been trialled the year before and secondly, the assessments had been going on in most parts of the country since Christmas. There had also been some studies published, most notably by AMMA, which demonstrated excessive workload during the previous year's trials.

The NUT teachers voted in favor of a boycott at their Easter conference. However, the Executive of the NUT refused to recommend this action to its membership and the boycott did not take place. It was with this development in mind that I asked the teachers I was working with how they felt about union action, union advice and work load. Their views were mixed, but in almost all cases, they held strong views about what it meant to be a teacher, what it meant to be a union member and how they felt about the Government's attempts to control their professional lives.

All the teachers in this study completed the assessment and testing tasks to the best of their ability. That is, some teachers worked a little harder at it than others, but this seemed to be more a reflection of their view of professionalism and their personality than their ability to actually do the work.

Reasons for Doing the Tests

Credibility

Jane's justification for doing the extra work was to give her own status as a teacher credibility. How could she complain about something she hadn't tried?

> It's sort of like the election. If you don't vote you have no right to complain. I wouldn't have a leg to stand on if I didn't make my point this year. I will do it.

Sophie also felt that without the experience of having to do the tests she would never know how bad they were.

> I think they're (the tests) wrong, but, am I God? Am I more important? So I really felt that I owed it to myself and my children to do it and then . . . and I only think you can criticize if you have taken part in it. If I had done it half-heartedly and filled in the forms or whatever I would never have really known the pressure that not only I was under, but also my children.

However, when I pointed out to Sophie that the public might not realise that the testing and assessment was unreasonable because most teachers in England and Wales had managed to do them anyway, she observed:

> The public don't care how much time we put in! But they would care if we refused to do it!

To be Fair

Barbara felt that if the children in her class had not done the tests they would not have had the same experience as other children and she didn't think this was fair.

> I couldn't put my children through a situation where they would be the only class who hadn't been through the system in the school.

Susan felt much the same way.

> I think you're in the same position as nurses. If you don't do the job the patients suffer. If I don't put all this time in I'm not going to be fair to the children.

But Susan had mentioned how little the children had got out of the tests.

> I found that . . . to do it thoroughly would take hours and hours of time . . . If I didn't do it thoroughly I wouldn't be giving the children the correct grades.

And who would mind about that, I asked?

> Well, nobody!

And Susan laughed!

Pamela, however, felt that parents were entitled to know how their children were doing.

> You are stuck with another problem with the children in as much as if everyone else in the country is being tested then those are important results. I mean you don't know whether they are at the time or not. But you also owe it to the children to take part in something that everyone else is taking part in. For their sake. And for the parent's sake.

But what was the benefit to the children from doing these tests?

> Absolutely zilch!

So why would it benefit the children to do the tests when Pamela believed they were useless?

> Because the parents would have wanted it.

So it wasn't really for the children?

> Oh, no! But there are parents as well, aren't there? They are somebody else that you must serve. 'Cause that's what you're there for. To serve!

But wasn't it true that the parents were likely to find out less about their children from these tests, than before?

> P I think they're going to realise when they get the reports how little they now know.
>
> R And then what will they do, do you think?
>
> P Absolutely nothing because they're apathetic.
>
> R So why would you care?
>
> P I care. I just do!

Fear of Consequences

Barbara was also worried about what might happen to her if she didn't do the tests. "I didn't know what would happen to me!"

Jenny became animated at the way the testing had been implemented through Government legislation.

> As a guidance it would have been O.K. But when you're presented with a thick document with so many levels and each level has got so many bullets you inevitably feel that you are expected to fulfill the requirements. We're told, "It's the law!". Our Head kept saying this. "We've got to do it, ladies. It's the law!" Well, if it's the law then it's possible to break the law or to be falling foul of the law or not fulfilling the requirements of the law. How do you know if you are or not?

I asked jokingly if Jenny could be put in prison.

> No! We did say that!

Fear of Failing

Patricia observed that many teachers in her area were afraid of failing. Their self-confidence was low, despite the fact that most of the teachers she was working with had many years experience.

> If you went and said, "I can't cope", you felt you were failing. I think all teachers felt that!.

Doreen, for example, commented:

> It's not in you nature to say "I can't do it! I can't cope! I've failed! You don't want to say that.

This view was reinforced by comments teachers made after the tests were completed. Some felt a sense of achievement that despite everything they had succeeded. Elaine, for example, told me:

I felt pleased that I'd done it. The thing is, teachers do it anyway.

Wendy pointed out that the reason she was being very careful about the work she kept as samples was in case someone came back to her and said she had not assessed the standards correctly.

I don't want them coming back saying, "You got it all wrong!"

Would she blame herself?

Yes!

Barbara also expressed similar feelings of guilt.

B I feel responsible for the children. I feel that I should give them the best that I can and if that involves me working myself to death, then, unfortunately, sometimes I do it. My head tells me, "No, that's not right!" . . . I've always felt that I should do more. I've always felt that I've not done enough.

R Was this guilt?

B Yes! I think so.

R Do you feel guilty a lot?

B Yes! . . . But I try to blame other people. I try to . . . teacher assessment, for instance.

R But then you're having to do all that extra work?

B Well, I get very angry . . . But I did it because I thought, if I don't do it I'm just going to go under. I'm not going to have a clue.

Worrying that something might go wrong seemed to be on the minds of most of the teachers. Angela, for example, explained why she became so frustrated with her Head.

A I suppose I wanted to do it properly, didn't I? Get it right!

What would have happened if she had got it wrong, I asked? Angela had no reply.

I reminded her that she had been teaching for a long time. It was unlikely that there would have been any dire consequences if things had gone wrong. What was she afraid of? "I suppose it isn't logical, is it?," she replied. Susan felt the same way. Why was she so anxious not to make a mistake?

S	Well, I don't know!
R	You've been teaching a long time!
S	I know! It's stupid. I know. Yes!
R	Why did she do all this extra work?
S	Perhaps I don't know myself. You see, you see it as an outsider, don't you? . . . perhaps I'm a whimp!

Susan also blamed her anxiety on her age.

> At my age, what am I? 52? I'm frightened I'll forget some of it and won't get it right. So I planned everything meticulously.

How did she feel when she was doing all this work?

> Extremely annoyed! I thought it was a waste of time!

Susan tried another tack. She wanted early retirement, so she wanted to leave everything up to date. But what difference would it have made if she was leaving?

S	Well . . . I know, I know!
R	I don't know. I still want to know where this big stick is.
S	Perhaps teachers make their own big stick?
R	Where is it?
S	Well, I don't know. I suppose a lot of tension builds up.

Pamela felt that parents were too quick to blame teachers when their children were having problems.

> In my experience, when I have come across children who have got difficulties with learning to read and you put it to the parents that they need assistance and they need help, initially the response is, "What are **you** doing?" Not, "What can we all do together." And I think they look for a reason, not in the child, but in some external factor and you're there and you can be blamed quite easily for what you haven't done - as they perceive it.

Even Pamela, who felt extremely angry about the testing, felt guilt!

> I think the hardest thing for me to bear is the amount of teaching I have not done. I find it hangs on me. Guilt. For what I haven't done. Because, in teaching, you've got to do what you can with what you have been given. You've just got to make the best of it instead of grumbling about it. You can do SATs. You can do anything. You're an adult. But those children have missed a half a term's education. And there's no way around it. You cannot argue that they have done anything other than miss a whole area of teaching.

Why would Pamela feel guilty about it?

> P Because I'm there to teach them!
>
> R But you didn't cause the SATs to happen.
>
> P No! But I always feel with whatever class I have, for whatever reason. It's just me! What I do with them that year - perhaps I think too much of myself - is important to them and to their future learning and if I have goals that I've set myself and I haven't met those goals then I have not achieved what I wish to achieve.
>
> R And you feel guilty?
>
> P I still feel guilty.

So what did Pamela do to resolve her guilt?

> P Well, . . . my friend and I are going in a half an extra morning a week each to try and catch up on things we haven't done.
>
> R But that's unpaid labour!

P	Yes!
R	To resolve your guilt?
P	Isn't it awful?
R	Do you think it's awful?
P	Yes, I think it's terrible.

To Judge their own Success

A number of teachers claimed that they had worked hard to facilitate the testing process for the sake of the children. However, it often seemed that they wanted the children to do well because it would reflect well on them. It would boost their morale. It is important to remember that at the time of this study hardly any teachers were formally evaluated.

Teachers could choose some of the subject areas they chose to test on. In a number of cases they chose the areas they thought the children would do best in. Mary, for example, thought her class would do well if they were tested on materials. However, the teacher next door chose human influences, not because she thought the children would do best at it, but because she was more interested in it.

> I took a rather sneaky way out. I chose materials because I knew they had previous knowledge of it . . . but I found they did better on the handling data material than they did on anything.

Doreen made a similar comment:

> I chose the simplest ones. I didn't train them, but I chose the ones that I thought they were best at.

Mary, who told me on a number of occasions that her children always did badly and so she was not under any pressure regarding the results of these tests, still tried to make sure that the results were as good as she could make them. "We had the children at heart, you see!" The best part about these tests, as far as Mary was concerned was that the children did better than she expected.

> I suppose I'm trying to be positive and trying to kid myself by being rather pleased at how the children have done. Better than I thought. I know I keep coming back to that, but as far as I am concerned, that's the only positive thing that's come out of this.

For Promotion

Angela believed that some of the men she worked with would use the testing process as a means of gaining promotion.

> The men are worse, if anything, than the women . . . They all want to keep in with the Head and that'll be even worse now.

Patricia was also keen to be an advisor because she believed it would increase her chances of promotion.

The Teacher Unions' Instructions

There were mixed reactions to the NUT Easter vote to boycott the tests. However, none of the teachers followed the unions' request to take on only as much work as was reasonable and then consult with their heads if the task became impossible.

Elaine did not support the boycott. She believed that union representatives were more militant than the average teacher like herself. She had also put in an awful lot of work prior to Easter which she didn't want to see go to waste!

> It was too late to tell us to boycott. We had put all that work in. Work done by then. There was no way we were not going to do it. I voted no! (At the local vote that was taken) I wanted them (the SATs) to go ahead.

> Militants go to the NUT conferences. All the teachers doing the tests voted against the boycott. It was too late to do anything about it this year. And you can't do anything about something unless you've tried it - see how it works and what the problems are.

I asked Jane what she would have done if the NUT Executive had decided to go along with the conference vote and support a boycott.

> We would have had to have done it (the testing). Our jobs would not have been safe if we hadn't done it. We would have been in breach of our contracts.

Did Jane feel that any teachers would have boycotted the tests?

> Yes. Some of the London boroughs. Nobody's job is safe. Well, we're O.K. here - it's a growth area. But I wouldn't have boycotted the tests even if I had been asked. It's a different kettle of fish in London. There's a different atmosphere there. I went on strike in London. I never would here!
>
> P We had a very big strike in 1970 - during Margaret Thatcher's time, when she was Minister of Education. That was a very, very large strike. Nearly every school went out. Most schools had decided to shut down. That was for more pay. Teachers were very badly paid then.

Doreen commented on the Union instruction to do only what was reasonable.

> The trouble with that is that not everyone will do it . . . I can understand it. They don't agree with testing. They want to stop it.

Doreen didn't agree with the boycott either and for much same reasons as Jane. But she was also sympathetic to the teachers who supported it.

> D I admire them. I don't believe in it, I don't! But I couldn't have boycotted them.
>
> R Do you know of anybody who would have done?
>
> D No! I've no idea. I've heard of nobody.
>
> R But there must have been someone?

D Some might have done. But it was too late then.

Mary didn't want to boycott either. But she felt the Unions should have worked harder to prevent the tests taking place. However, she didn't seem to know how they could have done this without a boycott.

> We've had questionnaires from the Union and I still say it's up to everyone and the Union to nip it in the bud. Rather than put the onus on teachers to strike and things like that. It should be nipped in the bud initially.

R What's the main reason for you wanting it to be nipped in the bud?

M I don't think it's necessary!

Mary felt that if the timing of the conference had been different teachers may have been more militant.

M I sincerely hope they are not going to be continued.

R But if they are, what will your reaction be to having to do them all over again?

M I think the Unions will stand up strongly. Now they are prepared. They've had our answers and they know people don't want to strike. But we were asked to strike once we had started the stupid things.

R The NUT were the only ones who took a positive stand. What was your reaction that?

M Well, I didn't want to strike once I started them.

R How do you think the strike vote happened?

M The conference seemed to happen at the same time that the tests were being implemented. If the conference had been three months earlier I think they could have done something more definite. They would have had a stronger answer and I think it could have been boycotted by some members including myself.

R So the reason it didn't get boycotted was because it just came at the wrong time?

M Yes! I think that was one of the reasons.

R Was it because you had already put so much energy into them at this point that you didn't want to quit?

M It was because I had already started.

R You had started so you had to finish! What kind of teachers sat at the conference and voted to boycott? Do you think they were Key Stage 1 teachers?

M The secondary teachers, definitely. Not people who were implementing it. Definitely. Because we had the children at heart.

R What you're saying is that the Key Stage 1 teachers wouldn't have gone to the conference looking for a boycott?

M Well, they couldn't have gone. They would have been too busy preparing for the tests, wouldn't they? (laughter)

Wendy and Elaine felt teachers weren't militant enough. I asked them why they didn't follow their union's instruction and complain to their Head.

W That's how it should have been done. But teachers are stupid, aren't they?

R Well - I don't know!

W Well, they fall over backwards to do what they think they are supposed to be doing. Teachers aren't bolshi enough you know.

R What did you think about those (union) instructions? *You* didn't take any notice of them . . . you just beavered on doing hours and hours of extra work. All you freedom went out the window. There was no flexibility. You had to get it done. What would have happened it you hadn't got it done?

E Well, I think the Head would really have been quite pleased. But at the same time we would have felt we were letting her down, letting ourselves down and letting the children down.

R In what order would you put that?

E Well, I don't think it would be letting the children down at all. In fact, I haven't finished it all . . . But I wouldn't have wanted to go the Head and said, "Sorry, I can't possibly do it!"

W I don't think we had the guts to go out on a limb and say, "Look we can't do this in a normal situation."

E Because other people were doing it. We weren't really told. We would meet other people.

R This vote in the NUT. What did you think of it?

E Well, I thought that was going too far! But when I had gone half way through the SATs I thought they had been right. But I couldn't have seen at the time that they would have known they were.

R I'm interested in knowing what your reaction to the NUT boycott was initially, what kinds of people actually voted for it and where they are now and what they're doing? It was a majority at the conference.

E Well - my first reaction was, "How absolutely wonderful!"
We had finished assessment and I was absolutely pig sick of the whole thing and I just wanted to get back to normal. I didn't want to do the SATs at all at the beginning of the term. I said, "Well, I just can't face it!" What sort of people? I presume they were left wing.

R Were there any Year 2 teachers sitting there at the Conference?

E I don't see why there shouldn't have been.

R So you initial reaction was, "Great, I don't have to do it!"

E It certainly was!

R So you would actually have boycotted?

E No! No! If I had been instructed to . . . Uhm . . . I don't think I would have had the bottle. I would have just toed the line.

R When it came to the crunch you don't think you would have boycotted. Do you think anyone would have done?

E If the whole of Hummberside had boycotted, I'd have gone along with the crowd. I don't think I would have stuck my neck out, "You do what you like, I'm boycotting!" No! I'm not into that sort of stuff!

Pamela felt that there were too many teacher unions and that was why they lacked clout.

> This is the whole problem of the nature of teaching and unions. If we were all in the same union and all teachers, like, say the miners, if one says out the miners actually did come out. They could all come out. Now they've broken themselves up and they have no muscle at all. If it meant that everybody could agree and wouldn't do it, then I would stand up and not do it with everyone else. But the problem is that they're always going to be some people who are going to do it.

Even so, Pamela doubted if there would be much support in her borough as it was so Conservative. "The last time we actually did anything in Bexley was in 1976."

Teacher Power

I wanted to know what which kinds of people could influence the Government to change its policies. Elaine felt that her Head had had the right idea. She had been annoyed with Humberside for spending thousands of pounds attempting to make the policy work instead of "sitting back and letting it work the way it was supposed to have worked and then they would have found that it didn't work!" This was the Union advice, however, and neither Wendy nor Elaine had observed it. We had an interesting conversation about what it takes to become a leader rather than a follower.

R The Unions said, "Just do what you can do and no more."

E But, as I said, it takes a lot of bottle to do that.

W And teachers just aren't militant enough.

R But the Unions are the teachers. The teachers vote for the people who run the unions.

W But the average teacher is like Elaine and me. The average primary school teacher.

R But the average primary school teacher elects these people to make these statements to you. It's true that the head of the NUT is not a teacher, but the Executive are all teachers and all your union representatives are teachers and the vast majority of those are primary teachers. They're saying to you, don't do any more than you have to do. So there seems to be like two groups of teachers. Union teachers who don't do any more than they absolutely have to do and the members who do everything. Why is there this discrepancy between what unions think you should be doing and what you actually do?

E Because we're used to attempting the impossible. We just feel we have to do it even if we don't agree with it. I don't know. Perhaps at another time we wouldn't have.

R If you know in you heart of hearts that you wouldn't boycott, would you still vote for a union representative who would?

W Yes, I would.

R Even though you wouldn't follow their advice? You see, someone has to start it.

W I know! I know!

E I can't be a leader.

R I'm curious to know. What does it take . . . Well, it has taken something because the Government is changing its mind. Somebody has got to the Government. I'm just trying to identify who. You've said it's the Unions. Somebody said to me the other day, "Well, the parents have been more or less disinterested as far as I can see!"

E Well, I think it depends on the school.

R Well, alright. So what was the pressure that was brought to bear on the Government that the Minister has said, "It hasn't worked and I'm changing it!"

W I think it's the Unions and the Heads.

R So it's good that you have militant people in the Union standing up for you even though you don't necessarily do what they want you to do!

W But I think if I had to do the same SATs next year and they weren't altered, I would.

R Would you?

W Yes.

Angela didn't think primary teachers were militant enough either.

A I was very amused by the NUT vote. I was on playground duty the first Monday and I was out there and my Head came rushing out, "Angela, Angela, what are you going to do? What are you going to do? Are you going to boycott the SATs?" And I said to her, "I'm not in the NUT, so I'm not." And although she's a strong NUT member she would have had a fit if I had said I'm not going to do SATs.

R Why?

(long silence . . . no reply)

R What was your reaction to the NUT vote?

A Well, I knew the teachers wouldn't follow it! I knew!

R Why?

A Because teachers don't! You know, I've been long enough in the Union to know that teachers will not take action. Teachers are so spineless on the whole. You get very few in primary, militant teachers. I think you might get them in the secondary, you don't get them in the primary.

R Why is that, do you think?

A I think they care about the children too much.

R But if they really cared about the children . . .

A Ah, yes! I know that . . . I've said that to them . . . but there's this mental blockage.

Angela had a bleak view of teacher power.

A You can't beat the Government propaganda, can you?

R Can you not?

A No, I don't think so!

R What do you think teachers can do?

A Just leave the profession.

R Teachers as a group, then, you see as fairly powerless people?

A Yes, I do really think so. I think it's their own fault, because I've always supported the Union and I'm the Union rep. You would be amazed. The minute strike action comes up they all fall away or get into a terrible state about it.

R Why is that, do you think?

A I don't know. I can't understand them really. But they won't. They won't!

I wanted to know if the reluctance to take strike action was related to gender in any way. Was it just women who were reluctant to strike?

A No, I don't think so. The men are worse, if anything, than the women.

R Why would they be worse? Looking for their jobs? Promotion?

A Yes, promotion, definitely. Especially the Head. They all want to keep in with the Head. And that'll be even worse now, won't it?

R Really, why?

A Because Heads can decide who gets extra money.

R So you think Heads have more power now?

A Yes, definitely. Governors do what the Heads say now. Because governors don't know anything about running a school, do they? Well, in our school, anyway, they do whatever the Head says.

Jenny was married to an NASUWT local executive member. He taught in a secondary school and was continually complaining to Jenny about the work she brought home. He also reminded her constantly of the joint union instructions. What was the position in her school regarding the contract and the current situation.

R Has there been any discussion in you school over the number of hours you are working?

J No! Not since the very first time it became a contentious issue. At that time we had got a very strong NASUWT membership. Those teachers have either now retired or have left for other reasons and gradually this business about the hours has slipped away - until I remind people. They forget! We've got two non-union members who, one in particular, who would like promotion, so she never argues. There's a probationer who is very much aware that she shouldn't be doing things but she does because she wants to get a good report. We've got a teacher who was redeployed, who is an NASUWT member, but still feels, mistakenly, if you like, beholden to the Head for having her job. So she doesn't like overstepping the bounds. Another one is a non-union member, who, because of various reasons just ticks along in her own way, and the other class teacher is the Deputy Head, and there are two of us who are union members who are older, but I'm the only one who would be prepared to make an issue of anything. So, it's difficult now. So people tend to bury their heads and get on with things. Perhaps have a little niggle, but do things for the mistaken feeling of having an easy life. It's got to be done somehow, they might as well do it. And there's nothing she can give us to help us, so we'll do it in our own time.

R How do you feel about that?

J I feel that's sad. And that is, also a reason why the teachers are in the state they're in. The fact that they do, especially in the infants, primary to some extent, but especially in infant education, where you're used to getting on with it, and people just accept that the job's got to be done. I think it's the case of the willing horse. You don't realise until something happens and perhaps you're ill for some reason that you've got a choice in the matter. And it's your right to say, "So far and no further"

R What would your Head's reaction be to you, or anybody in the school saying, "I'm breaking my contract if I do this work!"

J Absolute amazement . . . My husband says that the trouble with primary heads is that they think they're little Hitlers . . . it's more unusual to find militant union members or militant teachers in primary schools than in secondary schools. But, then, it's a different set up.

I asked Jenny what she thought of the NUT boycott. She told me she had never met a militant NUT member. " I couldn't have told them from AMMA!" In her area the only Union that had taken action was the NASUWT, her union. So why did she think the motion to boycott had passed?

J I can't understand why it was, unless it was the euphoria at the meeting. Perhaps emotions were riding high and the vote was there . . . in this area there are very few people who would strike - even

NAS members. Three of the NASUWT members resigned in the last action because they felt they could not take action and think this has generally been the feeling in infants schools. I don't know about Junior, but certainly in the infants schools people look at the children for one thing and we say we can't jeopardize these children. It's like nurses and patients - and mothers - and they won't do it.

R Well, it's largely women in infants schools.

J Largely women and I think they traditionally belong to a professional association in case they get into any trouble or any difficulties. But a lot of them say, "Oh, No! I couldn't strike!"

What did Jenny think about the Union's instructions?

My reaction was, "Great! I'll be able to do it. And I will do it." I've got someone in the house monitoring what I was doing and saying, "You know! You know what we've told you!" But then, two things happened . . . I was quite prepared to stand by my rights, if you like. I've got a disadvantage in that my colleague, my friend, is a member of AMMA.

But AMMA was part of the joint statement.

I know .. but she's a non-active member of AMMA you see. Well, my colleague, she's a lovely girl, but she's not prepared to stand up and be counted, or something like that, so that was a disadvantage. The other thing was, I went to a meeting where we asked one of our officers "What about if it is impossible to do all this?" And we were told that Shropshire and the LEA would not back any school who failed to complete the SATs. So there we were going in to say to our Heads well, "So far and no further. If we can do it in this time we will, providing the work load is not this, this and this." And they had already said that.

Did Jenny think men were more militant?

J Yes, I do! Because I don't think men are prepared, or if you like, daft enough, to put in the hours. I think they will say unless we're on the up and up looking for promotion most of them will say . . .

R I'm interested in the idea of women ploughing on and doing this . . . Will there ever come a point where they will say, "Enough's enough!"

J Yes! I'm already at that point now!

Unlike the other teachers in this study, Barbara had been prepared to stop testing halfway through. She would have observed the boycott.

> I wouldn't have thought twice. I would have been happy about packing it in halfway through.

Barbara was also hoping that there would be a ballot the following year. How would she feel if it succeed?

> I'd feel very happy.

The Government's Right to Control Education

One of the roles of a democratically elected Government is to formulate and implement education policy. I was interested in knowing how teachers felt about this prerogative of Government and how it affected their relationship with teachers.

A The Government have consistently run us down, haven't they? I now don't like to tell anybody that I'm a teacher because we haven't got any standing in society.

R Do you think the Government has the right to run schools the way it wants to do? The Government has interfered in your life pretty dramatically.

A Yes, a lot!

R Do you think they have a right to?

(silence)

R As an elected Government . . . ?

(further silence)

A I suppose, in as far as education does affect the well-being of the country. But I don't think they should interfere as much as they are because they don't know anything about it.

R Well, you said earlier you thought the whole thing was political.

A Oh, yes, it is. Because they're trying to kid the whole nation that they're improving education.

R So what are they really doing? What's the purpose of all this?

A Well, they think people will vote for them if they think they are improving education.

R But they're not really improving education?

A No, but the public thinks they are. I mean teachers probably know they're not, but nobody else does, do they? And people don't! I think people are always against teachers because they think teaching's fairly easy and they probably didn't enjoy school themselves.

R And they've got it in for teachers?

A Yes, that's right.

Who did Angela think could influence the Government?

A Well, this Government's making a mess of everything, isn't it.? It's not just education, it's everything!

R Yes, but this is a bit different. Because the Minister's changed his mind . . . he's already said it's too complicated.

A Well, I think Major thought he would be on to a good thing if he decided that education would be his big thing.

R But when it comes to elections how much does educational policy influence voting?

A Well, everybody who has a child worries about education, don't they?

R But is it enough for them to actually vote for or against a Government?

A As a teacher, it determines my vote a lot!

Taking Back Control

Most of the teachers in this study were asked to write reports about their experiences. Some just didn't bother. Others wrote reports, not because they felt they had much influence but because it made them feel better. However, the fact that teachers like Susan wrote to their local M.P. suggests that they believed some changes might take place if enough people complained. I asked Pamela how much influence she thought she might have in bringing about some changes.

P I could do nothing. I don't think I could do anything. I handed in my report. We were asked to write reports for the authority.

R What do you think will happen to those?

P Well, I chose not to write the report for the authority because I didn't agree with the way in which it was . . . laid out. It was laid out in such a way that it could be interpreted as anyone wished. It's just the same as when we go on courses. We're asked to tick boxes and say what we think of it.

R Right.

P So I wrote a three page document that I felt reflected what I wanted to get across which I think has been filed in the dustbin.

R Why did you write it if you thought it would be thrown in the bin?

P I wanted to get it down on paper and in my own head so that if anyone challenged me I knew why I felt what I felt. And, I just feel that the way it was introduced and the amount of consultation with

> teachers involved with children of that age group has been so limited that there is no interest in knowing what we know . . . They didn't ask the people who could tell them. You would only have to walk into any infant classroom I should think, in the country and say "Do you think you could this?" And I would like to meet an infant teacher who would say, "Yes, I think this is a jolly good idea to test children!"

How did Pamela feel about the Government's right to control education?

R You say you can't argue with a Government that's been elected and wants to test?

P Yes!

R Why not?

P You can put your case, but if that's what the country wants, that's what the country gets. I think parents were hoping for a lot from the SATs which they are not going to get. I think what parents wanted was a test which said, "There are ten questions and, look, my son got nine of them right!"

Pamela worked in Bexley. This education authority was one of the few around London that retained the 11 plus selection system and grammar schools. Pamela disliked this system, but felt it was enormously popular with parents in the area.

P I do think the parents want accountability. I think they felt that they, I mean Bexley is a much favoured borough because it selects and they love to see these children who have passed the 11 plus.

R These are middle class parents?

P Yes, but even so, not just middle class. Bexley will always be elected Conservative because they are committed to the system. This is an election factor in this borough. A very important one. It's what they fight elections on . . .

R Yes, but what about the ones that don't pass?

P Well, that's just the way the world is, isn't it? There are people who believe in the comprehensive system. But you have the elitist who will always keep the system going. And the people, well everybody aspires to their children actually passing the 11 plus. It's what everybody thinks is possible with their child.

R Even the socialists?

P Yes! No!

R I want to get back to the parents.

P Yes! I think the parents wanted . . . I think when the 11 plus was removed nationally, I think they didn't have this - my child could do well. And I think parents wanted a way of seeing that what their child could achieve . . . and I also think parents of children who are not doing well are interested, in a way, to know where they are.

Professionalism

The thorny question I asked many of the teachers was whether, as a professional person, they should refuse to implement policies which they didn't agree with and which created an excessive workload. I was particularly interested in Pamela's response because although she was job sharing and was only supposed to be working half the week she worked almost full time but for half the pay.

R At what stage does it become the case that you as a professional have determined this has to be not good for children?

P I don't think people are particularly bothered about professionalism. It's used as a term when they want to appeal to you. To do something. To stay and do extra work.

R Which you do anyway!

P Yes! (laughter)

R You're a very good professional person. You work for no pay!

P But I don't see myself as a professional.

R No? You don't?

P No! I don't think teaching is a profession . . . teachers don't have control over what they do.

R None?

P Well, it's being eroded all the time.

R But earlier on you were saying to me that one of the difficulties you have with the SATs is that there is too much teacher involvement; that the teacher, in fact, was being asked to make a lot of judgement. You didn't create the SATs, you administered them.

P Yes!

R But in that sense, you were very professional. Put it this way. Do you think a street cleaner could have administered the SATs in the same way? What element of the testing required that it be a teacher that did it - as opposed to a street cleaner doing it?

P Well, the fact that I've been doing it long enough and have been trained to do it.

R Isn't this what the Government said. Teachers are professionals. We can leave it to their judgement.

P But they were asking me to make a judgement over something which wasn't possible to judge because I had no involvement in the first place in saying what I was going to look at.

R Right.

P If I had been able to say what I wanted to look at and devise how I was going to look at it, then that would have been professionalism. But as it was, I was asked to do something and make something out of it and come to a conclusion although I had had no involvement in devising the task in the first place.

R So the professional part about it would have been what you would have done in the past which was create the task?

P Yes! Or be involved in its creation.

R But that's been taken away?

P Yes!

R So what is left in teaching for you that it could still be classified as a profession?

P I consider my professionalism has been taken away . . . the National Curriculum is determining for me how much time I spend in my classroom on the various areas which in my view don't even need to be introduced at an infant level.

Patricia believed that teachers were already skilled testers but the Government didn't trust them.

> It's undermining your professionalism. I mean, you do your's, but we'll give you something on the top in case you get it wrong. But we've been right all along!

I asked Patricia why she thought the Government didn't trust teachers to assess accurately.

> I don't see why we need it if there's a National Curriculum. Before there was no National measure. Now we are assessing by the same criteria.

I asked Ann and Sophie what they thought about the teachers of 7 year olds being the first to do the nationwide testing. Ann felt that teachers were becoming more militant, even though they were women.

> Well, they've been the donkeys . . . I was going to say that I think there's a motive behind it because people who teach younger children don't speak out as much as much as the people who teach older children. And they are predominantly women, aren't they, who actually do the job.

Sophie commented again on how teachers had allowed themselves to fall prey to Government demands without question.

> No matter how pressured we are, we have allowed ourselves to be railroaded. I think maybe they have bitten off more than they can chew because I think the old school . . . in our school there are definitely, not the ones that have been there since the year dot, but the mature teachers who have come . . . I mean it's all to do with socialization. To do with the emancipation of women, if you like. They know. They don't question. They do as they're told. The head says, "Write a report!" They write it. Now, you're getting the people coming into schools. Myself, Ann. We've got Helen, who's 25, 26. We're actually starting to question and say, "No! We won't do this!" We had this business about reports the other day. We said, "What happens if we refuse to do it?" And he said, "You can't refuse to do it, I'll be in a hell of a state!" And we said, "Actually, we disagree with them. We think they're a waste of time. We have to write them. You get far more in a ten minute interview with the parents. Surely couldn't we put it to the parents? Would they prefer to have a ten minute interview rather than a written report? If you got the parents to say so, I don't know how you would stand legally. I think when you look at the natural wastage of older members of the profession. Even though we have a superb older staff, over 50 . . . they have been brought up to do as they're told. As Cynthia says, "You worry me sometimes because you just outright disobey Stephen." And I said, "It's because I disagree with him. I'm not going to say, "Yes, Stephen! No, Stephen! Three bags full, Stephen." I'm actually going to start challenging him. We're bringing this now into the profession and I'm pretty sure that the National Curriculum and the SATs won't beat it out of the profession. I hope that the newer thinking generation, the emancipated women, basically, to whom it is not a second income and a middle class job. To whom it is their job and their career structure and they're going to want something back from it. Because at the moment we're putting everything into it and we're not getting anything out. We don't get recognition. We're not treated like professionals.

Wendy felt that teachers were too hasty to follow orders. I asked her why she hadn't complained about the work load.

> W Teachers are stupid, aren't they?
>
> R Well, I don't know!
>
> W Well, they fall over backwards to do what they think they are supposed to be doing. But teachers aren't bolshi enough, you know.

R So what did it take for a teacher to make a stand?

W Well, if I had been alone in my classroom with all my children to assess I don't think I would be finished yet.

R And what would you have done?

W Burst into tears and gone off sick!

R And then what would you have done?

W Never gone back!

Ann felt that teachers had little resistance to the demands made upon them.

> I do believe the teaching profession has allowed itself to become so downtrodden. I think the morale is so low in teaching at the moment. I think it is a real shame.

Sophie felt that as a professional she wasn't prepared to go to her Head and say the work load was excessive. She also felt that it was difficult to boycott as a single union because other unions such as PAT and AMMA wouldn't agree to one. In any case, she felt that what she was being asked to do as an NUT member was unprofessional.

> They were asking us to be unprofessional. When the SATs started it was a legality. We had to do them. And also, when I started them I said, "O.K. the Government's got it wrong. What they are asking us to do is not, in my view, teaching and educating children." I felt that very strongly, but at the same time I said, "They've worked it out, they've thought it out." As a professional it was up to me to try it and do my best and see how I coped . . . But I felt very cross that they were forcing me to do them and to fit children into slots.

But even though Sophie felt that to boycott the tests was unprofessional she was sufficiently dismayed at the testing process to speculate on the future.

> We're not treated like professionals, certainly by the Government and I think there's going to come a swing in the next few years and I think the Government is actually precipitating it by forcing us to do all these things. There will come a time when something will go. Next year, if the NUT balloted about this time next, I would refuse to SAT my children. Totally! I will tell the parents that.

So which teachers voted for the boycott this year?

S They're all lefty, aren't they?

R I've no idea! But you sound pretty lefty to me. You say you are not going to do it next year. Who goes to conferences?

S People who I have been talking about. Coming up . . . people who aim to change the profession.

R You're not one of them?

S Oh, I am . . . But I think there are still too many people in the profession who will do anything. But I think, in the next 3 or 4 years . . . I do think next year people will still say don't boycott the SATs.

Sophie and Ann both told me how they had come to join the NUT. Sophie joined because she wouldn't be forced to strike. She didn't agree with striking. Ann joined at her college. As it was the biggest union she thought it could get the most done. Sophie felt that the Government's strategy would strengthen unions.

> I think unions can be very heady things. In our area there are teachers who don't belong to any union but in fact would think of joining a union now because of things like the National Curriculum.

Unlike Wendy and Elaine, Sophie and Ann were prepared to make a stand the following year.

A Basically the constraints come down to the Government. I mean, we don't have very much say. Certainly, we haven't done this year. Next year, even with a ballot I still think people will do the SATs because . . . Well, I wouldn't. I would stick my neck out.

R Would you?

A Yes I would. I think the reason people would do it is the media. The legality. You have to do it. You know it doesn't work and you know you get nothing out of it.

R But you see, people don't know that it doesn't work, because everybody has managed to do it.

(There was a long silence here)

A But how much of that is so that next year they can say, "No, we're not going to do it. We had to do it last year. We worked our butts off." I mean, people and public don't care how much extra time we put it in, but they will stand up if I suddenly say, "No, I'm not doing it!"

R But you will be accused of being unprofessional.

S No, they can't do that. Because I've done it. Because I've been a professional. Last year I was a professional at the expense of my professional integrity. I felt it was wrong to do it. I did it because I wanted to give it the best go I could possibly give it. They could never, ever call me unprofessional. If I had never bothered to have a crack at it, they could.

Susan felt strongly that the education her children had received in previous years was better than what they were getting now. I asked her whether her role as a professional had changed.

R Are you just a professional tester now?

S Oh, No!

R Do you still think of yourself as a teacher?

S I think of myself as a dogsbody. Of having to go through all these hoops a lot of which are pretty absurd and are a waste of time. And I, well, I do think I am treated less as a professional now, than I was. I mean a lot of things were left to my professional judgement, weren't they? I could decide on things. Now it seems that I can't decide about anything. Decisions are made for me. A lot of decisions which I disagree with, you know. What things you have to teach and test.

R Which you feel obliged to do?

S Well, yes. But they're (the Government) not making the best job of it are they?

R And that's fair enough?

S Well, I don't know. I mean, the education the children have received this year is not as good as what they would have received two or three years ago. Of that I'm convinced.

R But, on the other hand, do you think the Government should have some say as to what you do in the classroom? Because that's what they're doing.

S Well, I think that's fair enough. I accept that. But what concerns me is, I mean, quite honestly, they haven't really had experience as a classroom teacher. They haven't really consulted a classroom teacher on this otherwise they would have drawn up a better set of targets, wouldn't they?

R Would drawing up a better set of targets for you make you feel less of a dogsbody?

S Yes!

Jenny also had strong views about the erosion of her profession. She believed that the National Curriculum was needed and that schools required more direction. However, she made some astute observations concerning Government control and the effect on the teaching profession.

J Control. Very political isn't it. Control. It was all part of this need to be controlling. What was going on.

R Do you think they (the Government) have succeeded?

J No, I don't! I don't think they can make up their minds. On the one hand they are trying to control what we actually deliver, and yet they're giving control of the school under LMS to Heads and Governing Bodies. It doesn't make sense.

R But do they control you now?

J I wouldn't have thought so. But, having sat here and seen the hours delivering what they've imposed on me - to a certain extent, yes! They seem to be pulling my strings.

R What control would you say you still have left?

J I've got the right to say, which I will now say, I do enough in my hours and if you want any more we've got to come to some other agreement.

R How do you see professionalism now, in terms of teaching?

J I think we still regard ourselves as professionals, but we've been undermined so much that our professionalism has been undermined too. Because, whereas before we thought we were in control of what we were doing, and that we knew what we were doing and we knew what children needed, now they're saying that we don't and we haven't and only they know - and unless we do it in this way we are not delivering to the children, so we are not professionals.

R Do you believe that?

J No, I don't. Absolutely not.

R But what you're saying is that they are saying that you've never really been a professional and now we're going to make you be professional.

J Yes! But they're not. Because they're just making us deliverers of an imposed system which we don't necessarily believe in.

R So what is the main feature of professionalism that you would see has been eroded?

> J Knowing what is needed, being able to deliver it, being, having a certain amount of control over the way in which it's done. An understanding . . . having trained . . . an understanding of children. Of the needs involved. Of the various processes in which you can do your best for the children. And acknowledgement that you're an intelligent human being who's trained to do a job and can do it.

Summary

Even though union membership is voluntary in Britain all the teachers in this study belonged to one. They had differing views of what it meant to be a union member and because of this they had different levels of involvement. However, the teachers were in broad agreement about what it meant to be a professional. Their first responsibiity was to the children they taught. This meant that they were prepared to sacrifice contractual agreements and ignore union advice. This was not necesesarily a good thing. What is bad for teachers is often bad for students too. However, once this realization struck home, the potential power of the union to bring about change became a more prominent issue for them.

Teachers believed they should be accountable to parents and that parents had the right to know as much as possible about the progress of the children. However, teachers did not believe the public viewed them as a professionals. This is surprising because parents appear to have involved themselves very little in the testing process. This cannot just be put down to apathy. Many parents do believe that the teacher knows best. It is only when something goes seriously wrong or when expectations are unrealistic that questions of professional competency are raised. The teachers in this study experienced little, if any, interference by parents. This raises the question of why teachers believed society undervalued them. None of the teachers complained ahout their salary. Was it because they undervalued themselves? Was it because they were mainly women? Was it because they were essentially in a service profession, one step removed from the nursery and the kitchen? The only consistently identifiable cause which emerged from this study was the issue of control. Teachers did not believe they controlled their own profession. And they were right. At the time of this study they had no negotiation rights and no say in the policies they were implementing. The feeling of powerlessness was translated into feelings of low self-esteem and a perception that no-one, least of all the Goverment, valued their opinion about anything. This was not a conducive climate for successful policy implementation.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

What an extraordinary year 1991 proved to be. So much work to accomplish and so little time to complete it in! As I reflect back on the conversations I had with these British teachers the phrase that keeps recurring in my mind is fortitude in the face of adversity. Somehow those assessments were recorded. Despite everything those tests were completed. And even though two years have passed since I first recorded these events, the experience is still vivid. I wasn't actually doing the work, but I certainly felt as if I was experiencing it vicariously.

Issues such as deskilling, intensification, and professionalism recurred again and again. Equally important, issues, such as how teachers saw their relationship with the educational bureaucracy and how they saw policies being formulated were also raised. In fact, teachers had a great deal to say about their role in policy implementation. However, contradictory and conflicting statements occurred frequently. For example, teachers knew that the government could not implement its testing policy without their cooperation but even when it was possible for them to subvert the testing process because of accommodating Heads, less than enthusiastic education authorities and a joint union instruction that was totally supportive of teachers, they went ahead and did they tests anyway. Why? Partly because they thought they had to, and partly because they wanted to. The "wanting to" was interesting! Almost every teacher I spoke with expressed some fear of failure; some concern that they would be considered "not up to scratch". The erosion of professional confidence, alongside the almost complete feminization of teaching in the lower age groups seemed, in my mind, to be a significant issue. Although teachers rarely raised the issue of professional feminization directly, it seemed to pervade a great deal of the conversations. Would men have reacted differently?

Another powerful image that emerged from this study was the voice silenced. Teachers over and over again expressed frustration at the one way communication that took place during the testing process. Even when they were given a chance to speak their thoughts, few felt that their thoughts carried any weight. In addition, when advisors or moderators were available, there was little attempt to invite or respond to questions. Teachers attempted to take back some control over what was happening to them through writing. They wrote letters and evaluations even when they believed these would be thrown in the bin. It was as if they were writing letters to newspapers knowing they would not be published. It didn't matter. The very act of writing made them feel better. When M.P.s replied to letters and started arriving on the doorstep they expressed amazement and delight that their voices were heard. They were not powerless after all!

The methodology adopted in this study was aimed at raising teachers awareness of their situation with a view to helping them find the will and the voice to change it. Although there were moments when some teachers became distressed, I believe that the methodology worked well. Certainly the contradictory and conflicting responses I received from teachers reinforced the view that teaching is a complex process of mediation between obligations. It simply is not possible to please all of the people all of the time. Dilemmas inevitably arise during the process of deciding whom you will oblige and whom you will not. Often the teachers chose to look after others rather than themselves. I hope that my conversations with them were both illuminating and emancipatory.

The images of power and control, though rarely expressed in those terms, consumed the testing process. And how was this control exercised? Often through fear.

Teachers were scared they would do something wrong. They were intimidated by mountains of paper instructions which seemed to change from month to month and through poorly disseminated verbal information. I don't believe teachers were kept in ignorance deliberately. Conspiracy theories at least require some evidence of practical forethought and planning and this was often sadly lacking on the part of bureaucrats. No, teachers were kept in ignorance through bureaucratic incompetence, bureaucratic muddle, bureaucratic overload and bureaucratic inertia. One of the problems in trying to organize this policy was the sheer enormity of the task and the time in which it had to be implemented.

Even when the right hand knew what the left hand was doing the outcome was acrimonious rather than harmonious. The right hand more often than not thought the left hand should be doing something different. Even while the Education Reform Act was being implemented philosophical battles were being fought between academics, politicians, parents, teachers and unions. Often they fought amongst themselves. And the arguments did not just revolve around the issues of testing. War was waged in the press over the breadth, depth of and kinds of knowledge that should be taught in schools. This was as much a battle over the control of knowledge as it was over control of teachers.

There was never any doubt that the Government's educational policies were driven by a desire to control teaching and teachers. They admitted this themselves. It is significant that the first cohort to be tried by testing was the most vulnerable groups of children in schools, the 7 year olds, and the most compliant group of teachers, those who taught the very young almost all of whom were women. I never believed this was a random choice, but the teachers I worked with took some time to come to this realization. The teachers in this study acknowledged that they tended to follow orders. As one teacher said to me at the end of 1991, "The hand that rocks the cradle won't rock the boat!"

Because teachers were consumed by the immediacy of the testing task they were often unable to draw a broader picture of the educational landscape even when the central theme of that picture was Government control of classrooms. But how did the policy work? What was the impact on teachers' working lives? How did they view their profession after the testing experience? What was their relationship with the bureaucrats who formulated and imposed the tests? Did the tests achieve what they set out to achieve? Were the summative and formative aspects of the testing processes so confused that neither was successful. How did teachers view the testing experience ? Did teaching and learning change? How did the government react to the barrage of publicity and criticism? What changes were made? What is happening now? These are the questions I will examine in the following chapter.

The Teacher and the Bureaucracy

Corwin and Borman's (1988) study of structural incompatibilities with educational organizations is pertinent to this study because of the dilemmas that arise due to conflicting obligations. The demands of teachers as professionals to control their work must be mediated against the demands of administrators to constrain it. For example, the first dilemma Corwin and Borwin identified was the dilemma of control.

The Dilemma of Control

Control can impede implementation because of bureaucratic protocol. In a decentralized system of policy implementation, and this was certainly the case in Britain, too much control can impede implementation, too little can cause slippage. In fact, both these problems occurred. Attempts to ensure that testing and assessment were performed satisfactorily, even when the policy makers and testing constructors were far removed from the classroom, became bogged down in quite ludicrous amounts of paper instructions. So much so that even the Department of Education called a halt to the process. By the end of 1991 they had consolidated information from different departments into one publication called "*Schools Update*".

> *Schools Update* is a new termly newspaper replacing *ERA Bulletin*, *NCC News* and *SEAC Recorder*. It is produced jointly by DES, NCC and SEAC. Minister of State Tim Eggar, NCC chairman David Pascall and SEAC Chairman Lord Griffiths have agreed to merge the three separate newsletters as part of their drive to reduce the amount of published material sent to schools. This follows their agreement a year ago to send out only essential items direct, and make other publications available to schools on request.
>
> (*Schools Update*, Spring 1992)

Attempts to control the testing and assessment process through a filtering down information process also led to hierarchical anarchy. If we look at the comments teachers made about the training they received, the quality was patchy to say the least. The Department of Education chose to disseminate its instructions through the local authorities' traditional bureaucratic structures. The success of the enterprise depended to a large extent on who was hired or coerced into doing the training. As we saw, many of the trainers were Principals who had never taught in an infants classroom. Worse still, teachers perceived other trainers as failed teachers who really didn't have a clue. It was rare to find a teacher who believed that their training was satisfactory. This was not just the case with the teachers in this study. I met many other teachers while I was in England who laughed, or threw up their hands with despair when I mentioned training. On the other hand, Patricia had taken her voluntary job very seriously and had gone out of her way to try and ensure that the teachers for whom she was responsible were as well informed as herself. But even she had to admit that the authority had not allowed her sufficient time to do the job properly. She was, after all, just a teacher and there wasn't the money to give her the time off that would have made the training process satisfactory.

So here we have an example of a control dilemma. The government attempted to control the process at a distance through a hierarchical model of dissemination. But instead of the bureaucracy expediting the policy, it impeded it because of its inability to detect the essential information from the forest of informational circulars. Worse still, the government was creating policy at the same time as it was attempting to deliver it.

Faced with a delivery model that depended on a classroom teacher implementing policy at a delivery end far beyond the gaze of government officials it seems incredible that the level of local supervision bordered on the negligent. Was it folly or mismanagement? If the action was taking place beyond the horizon of the department's vision, why wasn't more care taken to ensure that teachers were supervised? Perhaps the government depended too much on its own legislation which required the testing to occur without any plan as to how that might happen. It is surprising, because the government had always distrusted local authorities to deliver the goods and through the Education Reform Act they were engaged in a massive dismemberment of local authority powers.

Yet some 'slippage' was inevitable because the advisors who were responsible for ensuring the correct application of the rules regarding testing were small in number and had been inadequately trained and, in some cases, poorly selected. Some just didn't even bother to show up in the classroom. As Mary pointed out, "No-one came. Unfortunately, we didn't have one person!" If they did, as in Jenny's case, the results were counterproductive. Rather than being helped, Jenny felt she was being judged. No-one supervised Doreen either, but as she pointed out, visits from advisors were likely to be counter-productive. They could tell you that you were doing it wrong and that was the last thing you needed, especially as advisors were no more likely to get it right than the teachers themselves. Some advisors were clearly in over their heads. More than one advisor resented having to do all the extra work teachers were accepting as a matter of course.

The type of slippage that took place varied. Some teachers gave marks even when tests were incomplete. Others, like Susan, did the tests prior to the time allocated. Others ensured that their students received training. Virtually nobody undertook the tests as part of the normal school day. Most laughed at the suggestion. Doreen most closely approximated what the government envisaged, but she, on the other hand, had piloted tests the previous year and had the advantage of hindsight.

Clearly, then, attempts to control the process became tortured because of the highly decentralized process. Coupled with virtually impossible time constraints, the pressure of testing fell largely on the shoulders of classroom teachers. Under the circumstances the slippage was not that bad. Even so, consistency went out the window in terms of the testing itself. Some teachers spent days on the math game and others gave up on the floating and sinking. The fact that the testing somehow succeeded was largely due to the attitudes of teachers towards their work, and their overwhelming need to prove they could do whatever was asked, even if it was impossible. They feared failure. The government was lucky. Fear of failure overcame bureaucratic absurdity.

The Dilemma of Autonomy

Corwin and Borman (1988) also noted that the generally subordinate status of teachers had to be matched against the often powerful collective status of teachers' organizations. No where was this more obvious than in the case of the threatened boycott.

Teachers in this study felt relatively powerless to prevent the testing from going ahead. During our many discussions regarding the Easter boycott, a recurring theme was isolation. The teachers who were prepared to take action wanted some guarantee that they wouldn't be doing it alone. The fact that there are a number of unions in England complicated the organization of industrial action. However, it is clear that once the unions got together, as they did in 1993 and once they had a strategy worked out which would unite teachers, the power of unions was overwhelming. They won their battle in 1993 partly due to the militancy of the secondary teachers who refused to administer the English tests to their 14 year olds, and partly because the unions agreed that the workload had become excessive. By 1993, also, Margaret Thatcher was no longer in control of the Conservative party, and even though they successfully fought a general election, their popularity in England had been steadily slipping. The government of the day no longer commanded the support of the lower middle class. This is partly because of a recession that had swept Europe and partly because John Major just did not have the charisma of Margaret Thatcher. Lacking leadership, by 1993 the government's education policy was in disarray. This opened the way to a revival in teacher militancy the likes of which had not been since the 1970's. Teachers in this study looked back at the 70's as the heyday of their militant careers and if they were teaching then, they took part in the protests.

The dilemma of autonomy, describes a delicate balance between the power of elites to control versus the power of workers to disrupt. One of the reasons why this balance was tipped in favor of the teacher unions was because the head teacher unions, the local authorities, the Board of Governors and the parents no longer had any confidence in the government's testing policies. To some extent this battle was fought through the media. Traditionally right wing, somewhere along the way, the government had fallen foul of its erstwhile allies. Without support from the media, this policy was doomed. Coopted protagonists, teachers in their isolated classrooms were transformed, through their union involvement, into powerful antagonists of government policy.

The Dilemma of Occupational Status

This dilemma is concerned with the fact that teachers are legally obliged to comply with policy directives at the expense of their own professional judgment. There is considerable confirmation of this dilemma amongst the teachers in this study. Sophie, for example pointed out that she had been a professional, ". . . at the expense of my own integrity." Jenny believed the government was. " . . . just making us deliverers of an imposed system which we don't necessarily believe in." Barbara didn't know what would happen to her if she didn't do the tests, and Jenny's Head reinforced the subordinate status of her teachers by continually declaring, "We've got to do it, ladies. It's the law!"

This enforced diet of often tedious and meaningless testing was one of the main causes of stress amongst teachers in this study. As professionals, these teachers were deeply concerned about the educational progress of the children in their classes. Pamela summarized what many of the teachers felt when she talked about her own guilt. "I think the hardest thing for me to bear is the amount of teaching I have not done."

In the summer of 1991 I wrote an article on my research experiences for the

NAS/UWT magazine, "The Career Teacher". This was published in the Fall, and when I phoned all of the teachers in this study at the end of 1991 I sought comments. (All the teachers had seen the article by then). Pamela spoke again and again about how she felt the children had suffered; how little teaching she had done that year. "Please," she said to me, "make sure when you write your thesis to emphasize how badly I feel about this. Those children really missed out on six months work and I think people should know about this!" Yes, it was a dilemma for the teachers obliged to test. Discipline deteriorated, reading stagnated, time to listen to children disappeared and even making pancakes fell by the wayside!

The Dilemma of Career Structure

Corwin and Borman (1988) also identify the dilemma that occurs when opportunities for advancement are limited and motivation in mid career becomes increasingly more difficult.

I found very little evidence to support this contention amongst these teachers. Only Susan, Wendy and Elaine discussed the possibility of retiring. And only Susan succeeded. However, it's worth noting that Susan had the best chance of leaving the profession and yet she still felt highly motivated to do the very best she could.

Patricia wanted promotion and she believed that by taking on the voluntary training work she would advance more quickly. She was right. Patricia has since been promoted to Deputy Head. Of all the teachers Doreen appeared to have suffered least because she seemed to be the most organized and has also since been promoted. However, this was not her motivation for doing the work. As far as I could tell she was a hard worker, anyway, and this was confirmed by our mutual friend who introduced us. "I wouldn't do it!" Sheila told me one night.

If we look at the comments teachers made about why they were prepared to take on all the extra work, it is clear that motivation amongst infants teachers revolves around the fact that they are mostly women, that they feel a strong obligation towards their children and their parents, and the fact that they appear to lack positive feedback. Why else would they care so much how their children did in the tests? Clearly, if the children succeeded, they must have done well. This was a motivation! To prove to themselves that they were doing a good job - even when that job was not one they particularly relished and which they actually believed was damaging to the children. A moral dilemma, indeed.

The Dilemma of Order.

This dilemma deals with the fact that arrangements to maintain order can subvert the goals of instruction. The best way to demonstrate this dilemma is through the Department of Education's stated goals for testing. For example:

> The assessment arrangements of the National Curriculum will help to promote higher standards by providing teachers with more information about what their pupils can and cannot do. This will help teachers to plan their teaching to meet the needs of individual pupils. (National Curriculum and Assessment. A summary of messages from recent speeches to teacher associations by the Rt. Hon. John MacGregor OBE MP, Secretary of State for Education and Science, DES, July, 1990).

and:

> The point of the new tests is to give you and the teachers an exact picture of what your child has learned. Knowing how your child measures up against *national* standards will give you the best idea of his or her *real* progress. (*How is your child doing at school? A parents' guide to testing.* DES, February, 1991)

Another purpose of testing and assessment was to ensure that the National Curriculum was being followed and thus control the work teachers were doing. There was very little evidence that standards were raised because of the assessment process. In fact, there was quite a lot of evidence to suggest that assessing took precedence over teaching. Pamela's concerns are relevant here. Neither was there much evidence that teachers got a more exact picture of children's ability than they had had previously. The main exception seems to have been in the Science area. However, most of the teachers in this study admitted they were teaching a lot more Science than before the National Curriculum was introduced. This was one area in which they felt the children had benefited.

Mary was surprised at how well her children had performed but her results, like most of the teachers I worked with, were suspect. There was so little supervision when the testing was taking place. Mary, for example identified a great many discrepancies between her assessment marks and the SATs results. No-one visited Mary when she was testing. Thus, despite expensive propaganda and literature, attempts by the government to introduce a more disciplined curriculum produced, instead, a great many undisciplined classrooms.

The Dilemma of Equity

The last dilemma Corwin and Borman (1988) identified was the dilemma of equity. This highlights the virtually impossible task of treating all children fairly according to their needs within the constraints of a bureaucratic organization.

One of the reasons for including Susan's early conversation was to demonstrate this point. Her working environment was so far removed from the image policy makers portrayed in their documents that her children could not possibly have done as well as the children of more affluent, English speaking families in other parts of the country. When education policies are formulated they must appear to offer equality of opportunity in order for them to receive public support. At the very least, they must appear to be fair. The fact that equal opportunity does not result in equity is beside the point. The *perception* of fairness is what counts. The public in England and Wales, though not, interestingly enough in Scotland, believed these tests were fair.

It was interesting how, in this study, most of the teachers said that one of the reasons they were doing the tests was to be fair to the children. They said this even in the certain knowledge that the tests could not be fair. Most commented on the fact that they were short of time and resources. They felt ill-equipped to administer the tests through lack of information and support and poor training. They also knew that poor children were less likely to do well than children from "middle class" families. Even so, the teachers in this study worked hard to equal out the playing fields. They searched for books, and bought materials with money from their own pockets. They gave up their weekends, their lunch hours, their holidays, just so the children would have a fair chance at success. But can teachers overcome societal inequality? It would appear not. Susan's authority came third from last in the league tables published in 1991. Neither she nor I was surprised.

Teachers mediated these dilemmas with difficulty. When it came to choices, they tended to obey authority rather than their own professional instincts. There was never any suggestion of reprisal if these tests had gone awry; they were trials. Yet teachers worked as they were placed, in a condition of subordination. There was talk of protest, but none materialized. There was anger and dismay, but this was generally privately expressed. Personal lives suffered and children's education deteriorated. In 1991, despite the dilemmas, the power of the bureaucracy was preeminent.

Policy Implementation

It is apparent from the previous chapters that the onus of policy implementation fell on the teachers in the classroom. As McLaughlin (1987) explained, "Change is ultimately the problem of the smallest unit."

This was the first year of mandated nationwide testing so, as far as policy implementation is concerned, I was chiefly interested in how much of these enforced policies were adopted initially and how much of them were likely to become routinized in the future. Fullan's (1982) identification of critical factors affected adoption are relevant here. Amongst the teachers I worked with there was considerable willingness to "give it a try". This was partly because they had to, partly because they were open to new ideas and partly because they didn't feel they could criticize the process until they had tried it. There was considerable community pressure to go ahead with the tests through the media. However, parents seemed fairly apathetic in as much as they did not come to meetings arranged for them and seemed not to understand what the testing involved anyway. This, despite the fact that the government circulated literature to all parents during the implementation stage. However, parents may also have believed that the teachers were the experts and ought to know what they were doing.

There were few bureaucratic incentives for adopting the process except, perhaps, in terms of promotion. There was some discussion however, regarding financial rewards for schools that did well in the tests. The Government had posited the view that in the new free market educational arrangements where parents could choose which schools to send their children to, the government might give more money to successful schools and withhold money from the less successful schools. This suggestion, as one can imagine, has met with outrage on the part of teachers' unions who continually point out that the schools that perform worst tend to reside in areas of social deprivation. Teacher evaluation had not been implemented nationwide when this study took place, so there was no pressure on the teachers to do well on the tests as far as job security and increased salaries were concerned. However, doing well was certainly on teachers' minds. Children performing badly on tests was translated as failure on their part.

The Government's testing policies were enormously expensive to implement. However, although training funds known as GEST (Grants for Educational Support and Training) grants were made available to local authorities, they appear to have been insufficient and were often poorly utilized. Some schools chose to dip into their overall budgets to find extra help for teachers who were testing and, as we saw in Susan's case, teachers went out and purchased resources themselves. Lack of funding for this initiative arose fairly frequently. Again, Susan's school was under equipped to the point that she could not undertake much of her obligatory curriculum work effectively. This was a case where handing over financial responsibility to poorly trained managers at the same time as a major educational initiative was being introduced was poor judgment. Few principals in England and Wales have post-graduate training in management. But even if they did, the formula which provided the funds to schools was not necessarily sufficient for this policy to be implemented effectively. The government left the bulk of the implementation to the teachers in the classroom. This could be construed as empowering them professionally, but if the resources and training are withheld and the policies being implemented are impractical, the ultimate result of such a strategy is alienation and scepticism about the whole process. Teachers in this study did not feel empowered, they felt exploited.

Connor and Patterson (1983) have referred to a phase in implementation known as the commitment threshold during which implications of the change would be assessed. Fullan (1982) described the decision making process of adoption as a series of crucial questions. Did the policy address priority needs? Are the goals clearly stated? Are the barriers to implementation fully appreciated? Are the necessary resources available? (p.56) If Fullan is correct, the adoption of the assessment and testing process in Britain has a tenuous future.

If we look at what the government's stated goals were at the outset of their testing policy, questions immediately arise. In a series of speeches published in July 1990, John MacGregor, the Secretary of State responsible for education wrote:

> Reforms are needed to ensure that standards throughout the country are brought up to the level of the best ...
>
> The National Curriculum will provide clear and agreed objectives which will enable teachers to focus their teaching and the learning of their pupils. But I would stress that the National Curriculum **is not** inflexible nor is it all-embracing. It is a sure and rigorous foundation on which teachers can build using their professional skills and judgment and to which other important elements like religious education can be added....
>
> The assessment arrangements of the National Curriculum will help to promote higher standards by providing teachers with more information about what their pupils can and cannot do. This will help teacher to plan their teaching to meet the needs of individuals.
>
> Local Management of Schools will provide teachers with a direct means of influencing the running of their own schools.

It is doubtful that a National Curriculum, assessment and testing were high on teacher's priority lists. Job security, adequate pay and resources, and professional respect were probably higher. In poor areas, such as Susan's and Barbara's, improvement in social conditions such as housing, health and employment were high on everyone's priority list.

As to falling standards, claims of increased illiteracy, for example, have been questioned (Cashdan 1990, Hodgkinson, 1991).

Were goals clearly stated? The government made a major contribution to deforestation in its search to make goals clear. The problem appeared to be that policy was being formulated as it was being implemented and this required continual flows of updated information to a wide array of stakeholders. The primary objectives were clear. Raise standards through the introduction of a National Curriculum, assessment and testing. The process became obscured by a paper blizzard.

However, the testing objectives were clearly stated in the 1988 SEAC specifications for SATs.

a. Reliably and validly assess a number of attainment targets in all profile components and expressed in terms of TGAT levels.

b. can be used fairly by the maximum range of pupils, including SEN (Special Educational Needs).

c. can be easily administered and recorded by teachers.

d. can be so administered by teachers as a natural part of their normal (and frequently cross-curricular) mode of teacher.

e. requires only resources that are normally available in a primary school.

f. motivates pupils and engages their interest.

g. yields tangible results including written evidence for consideration in the moderation exercise or otherwise necessary.

It is quite clear from both the evidence in this study and other research conducted in 1991 that the SATs were seriously flawed. The NUT, for example published a report entitled, *Miss, the rabbit ate the 'floating' apple! The Case against SATs. A Report on* *the 1991 Key Stage 1 SATs.* Their findings are broadly similar to my own in as much as the report focuses specifically on the teachers' views of the tests. The authors of the NUT wrote:

> When, in a Barnsley school, the class rabbit ate the apple used in the 'floating and sinking' experiment during the assessment of Science Attainment Target 1, it was probably the least of the many problems caused by the SATs. However, it does illustrate, in an amusing way, a very serious point. That is that policies for assessment must be firmly founded on the realities of classroom life.

Were the barriers to implementation fully appreciated? Perhaps! But only in hindsight. The government continually stressed that 1991 was merely a trial. By the end of that year they could have been in no doubt as to the chaos they caused. In July of 1991 I had an opportunity to visit the offices of the Department officials responsible for implementing the testing procedures. The senior official I spoke with was kind enough to leave me in a room with the piles of reports he had received from around the country. "Please don't take notes," he said, "but feel free to browse!" And browse I did, through hundreds of pages of criticism of the government's policy.

There is no doubt that the mood in government was changing by the end of 1991. Assessment and testing was creating rebellious thoughts amongst teachers. The necessary resources were not available. Widespread discrepancies were reported. Education was being seriously disrupted. Before the assessments were even finished SEAC announced that the maths and science attainment targets would be changed. The headline in the press release from the Department, dated May 8th, 1991 stated, "More straightforward testing in school. Attainment target for maths and science to be revised" (DES Press Release, 145/91). By the 2nd December, Kenneth Clarke, the Education Secretary was writing,

> We have listened to all the advice that teachers gave us about the first 7 year old tests and we have acted on that advice. The tests for 1992 will be

> more straightforward and less time-consuming than the ones we trialled in 1991. They will concentrate more on the basis of reading, writing, spelling and arithmetic. Teachers should now find it possible to complete them well within the target of thirty hours.

The realization that something was pretty wrong with these tests did not prevent the government from going ahead and publishing the results anyway, something that their own TGAT committee had strongly disagreed with. Of the teachers I worked with, Angela's authority came highest in the combined rankings and Susan's was third from the bottom (102/104 authorities).

Although teachers in this study viewed the National Curriculum initiative positively, they had many concerns regarding its content and the levels at which attainment targets were set. Their frustration about lack of consultation or the fact that when they were consulted they were ignored, became even more apparent when assessment and testing materialized. None of the teachers I worked with believed that the "experts" who devised the curriculum and tests were really "experts". At least, they didn't believe there were any infants teachers on SEAC or the NCC. As far as I could see, there were not. I examined the list of people on the various subject committees and in most cases they were Heads (but not Infant Heads), consultants, advisors, academics or department functionaries. Teachers were given the opportunity to respond to proposed curriculum content, but very few in this study appear to have bothered. The sense of imposition, therefore, by people distant from the classroom acted like an undercurrent of dissidence ready to drown the policy as soon as the tide grew stronger.

Teachers did not feel that their professionalism had been enhanced. Quite the contrary. They felt it had been eroded. They did not believe that the National Curriculum promoted higher standards. Apart from a few teachers who felt they taught more science, the National Curriculum, as far as they were concerned, merely confirmed that what they were already doing was fine. As to whether following the National Curriculum provided teachers with more information, the general view was that it provided them with more work, because everything had to be organized around contrived attainment targets. And lots of boxes had to be filled in just to prove you had done it and children had learned i! Actually, this seems to have been part of the Government's plan. In the same July, 1990 document, MacGregor stated,

> Assessment is intrinsic to the National Curriculum. It is nothing less than the means by which we can all keep track of what pupils of have *learned* - as distinct from what they have been *taught* (p. 12).

The problem is, very young children forget. You assess them in January, and by June it's just a distant memory. All you can say about a science assessment in January is that in January it was taught and in January they knew it! Very few teachers felt that formalized assessment of the National Curriculum had given them any more and better information about the students in their classes. And it had radically altered their professional lives.

If we look at the implementation strategies outlined in the literature review, all four identified by Elmore (1978) appear to a greater or lesser extent in England and Wales. The government attempted to exercise tight control over its organizational members through legislation. The legislation determined the way in which different members of the organization would take responsibility for implementation. However, as resistance was inevitable it was also important to reduce the powers of those most likely to offer resistance, i.e. the local authorities and the teacher unions. This the government also achieved through its legislative powers. If the work didn't get done, there would be consequences! At the same as this systems model was operating, the bureaucratic model also came into play. Elmore's street level bureaucrats were everywhere, but they were rarely where they were needed and didn't do what was wanted. As Bosetti comments, they were charged with bringing "some semblance of order and stability on an otherwise unpredictable and dynamic social environment." (Bosetti, 1990, p. 25) Apart from the fact that many of the advisors, consultants and trainers were poorly trained themselves and sometimes poorly motivated, they also faced the kind of resistance Lieberman (1972) predicted. Workloads increased and established routines were disrupted. Street level bureaucrats did little to alleviate the situation.

The Government liked to believe that it was adopting an organizational development model because it claimed to have engaged in extensive consultation during the policy formulation stage. However, none of the teachers I worked with felt their opinion counted. Some had even made suggestions during the consultative period. But none believed they were listened to. This is why the possibility of consensus and cooperation was remote. We may be moving into the conflict and bargaining model as this research concludes. Teachers are no longer willing to accommodate government demands. And the government cannot implement its policies without willing teachers. Much of 1993 has been taken up with legal argument in the courts over whether teachers are obligated to continue testing.

When the Government first decided to push forward with the Education Reform Act, Margaret Thatcher's government was still in power and the Conservatives had won three elections in a row. There was no recession and the economy was artificially buoyant. By the end of 1991 the recession was deepening and Thatcher's grip on her party had waned. Political conditions were an important feature of the success of this policy. As Van Horn and Van Meter have noted (1977), there were a number of other preconditions for success which were sorely lacking during the implementation process.

Communication was poorly orchestrated and overloaded. There was little enthusiasm for the task by implementors. Enforcement mechanisms were in place, but undermined by a shortage of teachers in some parts of England. Resources were inadequate. Policy standards and objectives were inappropriate and confusing.

Berman and McLaughlin (1976) identified other critical factors necessary for implementation such as staff training and adaptive planning, neither of which was well coordinated or competent. Fullan (1992) included teacher-teacher relations, the principal, teacher characteristics and orientations and school characteristics as factors affecting implementation. These certainly featured prominently in my conversations with teachers and mostly in a negative way. Principals seem to have been of little help to teachers. Teachers who were not testing gave little moral support beyond commenting that they were glad they didn't have to do it too! Fullan (1992) also refers to the need or relevance of change and the quality and practicality of the program. Clearly, this policy did not measure up. Teachers were reluctant to test and they did not see its relevance. They saw the testing and assessment as neither practical nor necessary.

But then teachers are not politicians. The Conservative Government wanted to remodel education to resemble a sentimental flashback of what they considered were better days. Unfortunately it was an era that never really existed for the majority of people.

This testing policy was economically motivated. It was also designed to appease parents who had been deceived into believing that their children could do better if teachers just did a better job. However, as Keith Kreiger of the National Educational Association of America (1991) remarked in response to President Bush's attempt to test America's children, "I can guarantee our fellow citizens that schools are improving. It is childhoods children, "I can guarantee our fellow citizens that schools are improving. It is childhoods that are not!"

Teaching as Work

McCurdy and Speich (1991) hit the nail on the head when they predicted the revolutionary potential of "authentic" style testing. They saw the replacement of multiple choice tests with curriculum base tests acting as a "major force in curriculum reform". Brandt (1989) viewed them as "powerful levers of change" because they had the potential to influence educator's behavior (p. 123). Apple (1989) likewise noted that mandated testing restructured teacher's work so that it was more specifically linked to specific outcomes. There was a move towards corporate style management and a closer monitoring of curricular goals. Evidence from this study supports the view that introducing assessment and testing alongside curriculum change does have an impact on teachers' work.

The concept of proletarianization, especially the proletarianization of condition whereby middle class workers are forced to adopt conditions of work more closely associated with manual workers is relevant to this study. Although teachers saw no reduction in their pay and conditions during the introduction of this policy, they did see an erosion in their professional status. More significant still is the potential introduction of performance related pay. This initiative was being reviewed by the School Teachers' Review Body (the Government appointed body that replaced the Burnham Committee) in 1992. In its submission to this body, the Department of Education wrote:

> The development of performance-related pay (PRP) is an essential component of the Government's strategy for raising standards in the public sector.

Teachers have been opposed to performance related pay since the concept was first mooted. Since testing began they have been even more resistant to the idea. They have also become increasingly resistant to the notion of schooling as an assembly line. An NUT member wrote to the Guardian in April of 1993:

> The whole conception of the exams is based on a view of education and learning as dolloping out discrete lumps of knowledge to a uniform audience. The reality of education is very different. The tests tell us nothing that cannot be assessed in other more educationally valid ways.
>
> * They create unacceptable pressures on students.
> * Their main purpose is the creation of league tables
> * They will be used in some schools for appraisal and performance related pay.
>
> Testing is designed to maximize competition between students, between teachers, between schools and between local authorities. I do not believe that educational improvement will occur through greater competition but through greater cooperation. The dogmatic application of the marketplace to education has been and will continue to be damaging.

Although this teacher was writing in reference to the soon to be boycotted Key Stage 2 English tests, his remarks were a reflection on the experiences of teachers over a three year period of trials. None of the teachers in this study felt under any threat of appraisal. In 1991 it seemed to be the least of their problems. If anything, they were under pressure because they constantly appraised themselves. "Where's the big stick?" I would ask them. "Me, I suppose," they would reply. Measuring performance by arbitrary and externally applied outcomes was exactly what they were doing to themselves. And this was one of the most worrying features of this initiative. Before the introduction of the tests, teachers would measure their successes contextually.

It needs to be stated, however, that some of the teachers in this study benefited from outside influence. Mary, for example, was pleased to realize that her children were not quite as stupid as she had imagined. This was not a bad thing! Clearly, teachers enjoyed the feedback that these tests gave them. In the absence of reward and praise, how else could they tell they were doing a good job. The tests filled a worrying vacuum. Unable to go to their Heads for support or advice, deeply suspicious of anyone in authority, the only measure teachers had of their own success was their testing mechanisms. I believe that one of the main reasons why the teachers in this study undertook the testing was because it gave them some indication of their own professional expertise. The tragedy is that this should never have been necessary. All teachers can benefit from encouragement and praise. This seemed sadly lacking from the administrators in this study. Why else would the teachers be so reluctant to admit to their Heads that the tests were a professional nightmare?

The extent to which these teachers were proletarianized is hard to say. Teachers often felt they were not valued by parents and the community.
Angela, for example didn't like to tell anybody she was a teacher. "We haven't got any standing in society!". Teachers also felt their professional status was being eroded. Jenny just wanted to be treated like an intelligent human being! However, teachers were still salaried. The benefits they enjoyed as teachers such as pensions and permanent contracts remained intact. They did not feel that they were reduced to the level of a laborer.

Organizing the assessment and testing required considerable management skills and administering the tests, however directed they were, still required some professional judgment. The main aspect of proletarianization that seems to have occurred is over the lack of control of process. Teachers were not involved in the formulation of this policy and resented its imposition. The implication behind the government's strategy was that teachers were incompetent testers and could not be trusted to devise their own standards of measurement. As teachers had previously had responsibility for measuring educational success this was a significant erosion of their professional status.

There is considerably more evidence for the introduction of deskilling in the classroom. The process of deskilling involves tasks being broken down into smaller and smaller units in order that management may take control of the labor process to enhance efficiency. It is dubious whether teachers in this study were either deemed to be more efficient or believed themselves to be more efficient, but one thing is certain. Their teaching tasks were broken down into a multitude of small units and management (the Government) was indeed seeking to control the process of teaching. In this first year of policy implementation they succeeded, but at considerable cost. They lost what was left of teacher goodwill and created a climate of resentment and potential resistance.

Intensification is also the product of increased supervision. Getting things done becomes more important than how things get done. Time and again teachers in this study said they had no time to listen to children, no time to do fun things in the classroom, no time to make pancakes. They didn't have much time for themselves, either. Jane's distress over dinner money was a metaphor for her distress at not having time to be a teacher. "Teacher's don't get any free time in infants' schools," was a comment I was to hear over and over again. Another feature of intensification is erosion of thinking time. One of the benefits of this study was the opportunity it afforded for reflection. If teachers are so busy doing, that they have no time to ask why they are doing it, professionalism is eroded because they are losing control of their working lives. It is significant that many of the teachers expressed satisfaction at actually managing to complete the tasks they had been handed, despite the Government's own admission that they were unmanageable. Some saw this as a demonstration of their professionalism. Apple, however gives a different interpretation.

> The process of control, in the increasing technicalization and intensification of the teaching act, the proletarianization of their work - all of this was an absent presence. It was misrecognized as a symbol of their increased professionalism.

The teachers in this study were aware of their eroded status, but saw the completion of the tasks as an aspect of their professionalism. When I asked them what it took to for their professional integrity to overtake their professional zealotry, they could only say, more people feeling the same way. None felt they were leaders, only followers. So what resistance could I detect from the teachers I worked with. Very little. Ozga and Lawn (1981, 1986, 1987 and 1988) have written frequently about the erosion of teacher skills and the lack of resistance to this process.

> Many workers disagree with the processes and ideas they are asked to operate. They have no choice but to fulfill them though they also resist them - by controlling the pace of work, by disputing management's right to manage, by striking." (1981, p. 65).

There was little evidence of this resistance in 1991. Susan chose to do some tests early. Mary took a week off after protesting to her Head. Some gave children the benefit of the doubt when it came to results. Others, like Barbara, just filled in boxes to get the job done. On the whole though, there was very little effort to resist the work they had to do. However, there were strong indications that resistance might materialize in the future. Only Doreen appeared to come through 1991 relatively calmly. The rest of the teachers were adamant that they didn't want to go through another year like this one. Wendy, Elaine and Susan wanted to retire as soon as possible. So far, Susan has managed to do that. Pamela was not rehired the following year. She was replaced by a probationer from Australia who was having difficulty coping with the work. Sophie went on maternity leave. Patricia and Doreen were promoted to administrative positions. Barbara was given a Level 1 class who did not have to do the tests. Wendy and Elaine are still testing.

In the Spring of 1993, the NAS/UWT successfully balloted their members to boycott the tests. The catalyst for this vote was the contentious English tests for 14 year olds. Not only were the secondary teachers opposed to the content of the curriculum, they rose up in rebellion when they saw the tests. The dispute escalated into a comprehensive boycott of all testing and assessment. By Easter of 1993, all the teacher unions, including the unions representing school managers, decided to join the NAS/UWT boycott. Wandsworth Council took the NAS/UWT to court. The Council lost. They also lost their appeal to the High Court. The Court decided that the boycotts were a legitimate labor dispute. The point at issue was not the testing itself, but the unreasonable workload that the tests had created. Teachers had a contract with the Government and this contract was being broken by the workload of mandated testing. Only a handful of schools went ahead with the tests in 1993. As the teachers in this study predicted, it took "militant" secondary teachers to get the ball rolling.

Implications for Future Practice and Research

Results of this study indicate that teachers have an intimate knowledge of classroom practice. As they are the front-line implementors of any educational policy it seems to make sense that any future policies with regard to testing should take into account their views about the processes of implementation. In particular, the practicality of implementing policies need to be assessed by teachers rather than administrators, academics or bureaucrats.

It also seems pertinent to mention the role of Head teachers. They do not emerge from this study in a positive light. There was clearly a poor understanding of what was expected of school administrators, even though the Department of Education sent out a number of documents detailing their responsibilities under the Act. The assistance and understanding which came from Heads varied from non-existent to providing as much help as was feasible. The Government needed to win these people over. They made little attempt to do so. Instead, they met with a surprising level of hostility and resistance. This was in no small part caused by the ever increasing demands made upon them by other aspects of the Education Reform Act such as local management of schools and the reorganization of curriculum within schools. They were already overburdened. Thus, this policy implementation was a fraught with problems right from the start. One only has to look at the people who were appointed to SEAC to understand why. It is doubtful if any of the members of this committee had recently taught 7 year olds.

This study also points to the danger of formulating any policy solely from a political or theoretical perspective. Unless a policy is viable in the classroom, it will fail. Not because teachers will refuse to implement it. They will be curious. They will try and make it work. In the first year of implementation they will probably be willing to try it out. It will fail, because ultimately it will interfere with the process of teaching and learning. Once teachers see that a policy is harming children, they will find ways to resist it. It is not so easy to win over the hearts and minds of teachers. Unlike machines, they must reconcile thoughts with actions in order to manage their lives. And when their thoughts are focused on doing the best for children, they cannot be mechanistically recalibrated into producing a different kind of action. The lessons that must be learned from Britain are clear. Even when there is a political agenda, a political will, and legislated sanctions, teachers cannot be bludgeoned into submission when children's education appears to be suffering.

However, myopia is endemic in government. This is unfortunate for politicians because the ideal way to bring about radical change is through leisurely stealth. If governments could introduce policies like people pollute the planet, the damage could be done in almost complete ignorance of the event. Unfortunately, newly elected, or in Margaret Thatcher's case, continuously elected governments, take on an arrogance akin to eternal life. And this ultimately is their downfall. No government is so powerful that it can determine destiny in perpetuity. Neither should it be able to. Policies should be mutable just as politicians should be expendable. The best we can hope for as educators is that along the way education is sufficiently illuminating that as adults we come to understand our condition and can make informed choices about our future. This cannot happen if the knowledge we are allowed to discover is politically controlled.

Curriculum content must be broad enough to allow for differences amongst societies and cultures, teachers and students and between teaching and learning. Bench mark testing is appropriate only as long as it takes into account social, economic and cultural differences. Government monitoring of student performance does not need to be annual, nationwide or mandatory. If teacher assessments are randomly and regularly monitored the same way the Department of Education monitors school performance, there should be no need to engage in the expensive exercise of annual nation wide curriculum based tests, especially if they distort and disrupt the process of teaching and learning.

Measurement of progress needs to more clearly thought out. As Troman (1988) pointed out, it is simply not possible to combine summative and formative tests. The latter are especially unreliable as a bench mark measure of progress. This is not to say that teachers' assessments are inaccurate; quite the reverse. Teachers in this study found their judgment to be relatively accurate when compared with the SATs results. The problem is that formative assessments are not meant to be used summatively as a statistical measure of progress. They are intended as diagnostic and teaching tools.

Governments must also concern themselves with the phenomenon of teaching to the test. If the bond between curriculum and testing is too tight, teachers will become product oriented to the detriment of broadly based learning. It would be interesting to pursue research which seeks to determine teachers' views about tests. This study indicated that teachers are not opposed to testing. They like to know where children are, because it is a measure of their own success. However, they have received very little training in the art of testing. There is no evidence that these assessments and tests were used diagnostically or to determine subsequent teaching strategies. Teachers' views on the kinds of tests they would like to administer should be sought. At the same time, teachers' use of test results should be more carefully assessed.

It seems wise, also, to determine whether an increase in curriculum based testing improves teaching and learning. There is no evidence for this thus far. The kinds of tests that were administered in 1991 were not useful in providing a base line of educational achievement. The Government published results again in 1992, but they cannot be reliably or validly compared with the previous set. The tests were not the same and the standards were not sufficiently well monitored to provide sound data. It is doubtful that tests which rely on teacher judgment can be used as an external and impartial measure of improvement. In any case, it was not the view of the teachers in this study that testing improved learning. They believed that better training of teachers, more time to prepare and mark, smaller classes, a National Curriculum and good teacher morale improved teaching. Some also believed that an improvement in social conditions would also improve learning.

It is not the case that teachers views are never sought. Teacher unions and governments ask for and receive teacher input. However, it would be interesting to ask teachers what impact they believe their views have on determining policy. Teachers in this study believed that it did not matter what they thought. Governments determined policy and that policy was determined by the electorate who voted them into power. A study on teacher power from the perspective of the classroom teacher could prove illuminating.

There has been very little research undertaken on the potential contradiction between teachers' political persuasions and their obligations within the teaching profession. I would have liked, for example, to have talked with a group of Conservative supporters who were also teachers. What philosophical conflicts, if any, did they experience between their political and professional lives? As all teacher unions in Britain including the right wing ones, objected to the Government's testing policies, how did members of traditionally conservative unions respond to the conflict within their ranks?

It would also be pertinent to review the impact teacher unions have had on government policy? They always claim to exercise influence because it is in their best interests to believe and promote that, but there is little research to confirm this view. Teachers in this study believed their unions were relatively powerless. However, tests were boycotted in 1993. It would be important to ascertain the train of events that brought this about. What role did unions play in mustering support for a boycott? To what extent was the resistance to this policy orchestrated by political opponents to the Government through the media? What conditions were necessary for this policy to be put in place only to be subsequently thwarted?

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AMMA NAHT NASUWT SHA

ASSESSMENT UNDER THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM: JOINT UNION ADVICE ON WORKLOAD

INTRODUCTION

The following advice is intended to assist teachers in keeping the workload that arises from assessment within manageable limits and to ensure that it causes the minimum disruption to the main job of teachers: teaching children. This joint advice has been agreed by the six teacher organisations in order to assist teachers in keeping their workload manageable. Individual teacher organisations are briefing their own local and school representatives and teachers who have further concerns should raise them with their representatives in the usual way.

The advice concentrates on Key Stage 1 Assessment because of the involvement of all first, infant and JMI schools in this year's "first unreported run". However, this year's 2% pilot for Key Stage 3 for Maths and Science will be followed by the involvement of all secondary and some middle schools in key stage 3 assessment in 1992. **The advice therefore has direct relevance to ALL teachers.** The six teacher organisations intend to meet later in the year to review progress and issue further advice in the light of developments affecting the increase in the general workload of all teachers.

A copy of this advice is being sent to your Chief Education Officer with a request that it be taken into account in the LEA's training and advice on assessment.

1991: A TRIAL RUN

Given the many current pressures on schools it is important for teachers to keep assessment developments in perspective. This year's Key Stage 1 assessment is a trial and the government have made it clear that there may be further alterations to the arrangements before they are finally implemented in 1992. As the Secretary of State said, 1991 is "the trialling period for the national system as a whole . . .". In other words, the government is anticipating that there may be problems within the 1991 model of assessment related to workload or other aspects. If schools are having difficulty with the trial run it is essential that they raise these difficulties with the local education authority, rather than suffer in silence.

A REASONABLE WORKLOAD

In thinking about assessment and how it operates, it is important that it does not come to dominate the curriculum. *Headteachers and teachers need to work together to ensure that it does not demand so much time and effort on the part of teachers and pupils that it undermines the learning and teaching process.*

It is therefore important that headteachers and teachers should agree to use their professional judgement and, where necessary moderate and adjust elements of assessment which are clearly not serving the best interests of a child or the class. Such actions would need to be justifiable on grounds of what is reasonable or unreasonable taking account of all the circumstances and possible alternatives. It is therefore not a matter on which hard and fast rules can be laid down. It is however, possible to indicate some of the factors which may be taken into account.

Since the SATs are untried there could be aspects of the SATs which will prove unrealistic. There will certainly be many variations on the average class of 30, assessed by a single unaided teacher, envisaged by SEAC. SEAC acknowledges that problems of organisation and management will be caused by:

- mixed aged classes;
- small schools, especially with teaching heads;
- classes with more than 30 pupils;
- classes with pupils whose home language is not English;
- classes containing pupils with special educational needs; and
- children transferring schools; moving home for example, at the beginning of term.

High teacher turnover, and teacher absence could be added to the list.

It is also helpful to note what the Schools Examination and Assessment Council (SEAC) has said about the workload SATs should involve. Without endorsing the SEAC specification for the SATs, which should be available in schools, the teacher organisations believe it provides a helpful baseline of what might be expected. In relation to workload SEAC specify that:

- About "30 hours" or the rough equivalent of 1½ weeks of classroom time should be devoted to

SATs at the school's discretion during the first half of the summer term.

- The reading aloud assessment from English attainment target 2 are not covered by this limit. Heads and teachers will need to determine what is reasonable time for SAT assessment for this attainment target.
- Teachers should have to make less than 50 SAT assessments per pupil where each assessment broadly equates to one statement of attainment.

ADVICE

1. As the 1991 assessment trial run is implemented, schools should take account of the SEAC specifications. Assessment and the time needed by teachers for preparation should be kept within manageable limits for each teacher and should be kept in proportion in relation to the rest of the school's activities.

2. Clear communication between staff will be essential if individuals directly involved are not to feel isolated and problems are to be solved effectively. The extra closure days granted by the government can be used to establish policy and to place assessment within the context of the overall priorities of a school.

3. It may be necessary to drop certain activities during the period of the SATs. The school's calendar of activities should take account of the workload. If, for example, there is traditionally a parents evening during the first half of the Summer Term, it would make sense to postpone it. Year 2 teachers directly involved, are likely to have to reduce their commitments outside the classroom, as curriculum leaders for example, during the period of the SATs.

4. The headteacher and teachers in a school need to work together to establish their priorities. Where a teacher or teachers feel the demands upon them are becoming intolerable, they should alert the headteacher at the earliest opportunity to the difficulties which are emerging so that the head can review those priorities.

5. Where, the SAT cannot be completed in a fair and proper manner for a child or group of children – as a result of teacher absence for example – heads should consult LEA moderators but be prepared to take a stand that Teacher Assessment should replace the SAT.

6. Schools should keep in close communication with the Local Education Authority (LEA) during the SAT period. It is the LEAs responsibility to coordinate and administer the process.

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